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NO BUGLES TONIGHT

BY BRUCE LANCASTER



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FOR
Southworth *and* Margaret Lancaster

NO BUGLES TONIGHT

By Bruce Lancaster

In this crackling new novel of the War between the States, the author of GUNS OF BURGOYNE and THE SCARLET PATCH tells of a Union spy in the desperate days of Vicksburg and Missionary Ridge, of his comrade in arms, and the women who shared their faith and dangers.

This is the story of dashing, self-centered Whip Sheldon of Kinnyard's Ohio Battery, who learned from the Virginian, James Andrews, that a cause can be greater than a man; who took over from Andrews the supremely dangerous job of maintaining contact with Union sympathizers within the Southern lines. It is also the story of Whip's devoted friend and battery mate, Tom Madden, and of two Southern girls, Penn Grainger and Sharon McDaniel, who, opposed to Secession, worked endlessly and daringly not only to gather information for the Union armies but also to keep up the hearts of "the right sort of people" in occupied territory.

As in all Bruce Lancaster's stories, the course of action is historically correct. The author's knowledge of the military actions, of the character of both armies, and of the conditions of the times, makes this a story in which the reader lives with the men who worked and fought for the Union, with the girls who worked beside them, and with the opposition.

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NO BUGLES TONIGHT

P A R T I

The Raiders

THE March rains of 1862 sent torrents of water hurling down from the Cumberland Plateau to swell the rivers of central Tennessee. Stone River, Duck River, and the mighty horseshoe of the Tennessee itself swirled over their banks. Forgotten courses became rivers and the streams they fed swept on in high flood.

The rains ceased. River, fork, and creek drew back within their banks and over the drying ground another flood poured from the north as the blue columns of Ormsby Mitchel's division probed south from Nashville, lapped about Murfreesboro, reached toward Shelbyville and the Alabama border. The tide of blue kepis and black slouch hats followed the contours of the land as the streams had followed them. The men who composed it knew vaguely that they were drifting south. Some of them knew that the parent stream from which they spilled was moving ponderously east and southeast, under command of Don Carlos Buell. But they were concerned only with road, trace, and path that led on to Alabama.

Now, in early April, Mitchel's men spread west and south of Shelbyville along the twisting Duck River where poplars were thickening with new leaves.

A barouche rolled along the track that led from War Trace to the pike beyond Shelbyville. In the rear seat, walled from the world ahead by the rigid back of the Negro coachman, two women talked earnestly. One of them was not long past twenty. She was dressed in the black and lavender of mourning. Her oval face, framed by a mass of soft brown hair, seemed prematurely grave in repose. But when she spoke, glints danced in her gray eyes, color tinted her cheeks, and dimples showed on either side of her full, vivid lips, changing fresh prettiness to something close to beauty. The other woman, tall and thin with a pleasant angular face, was dressed in colors whose brightness would have better suited her companion. She kept drawing her

long upper lip down over her prominent teeth, a trick that suggested years of hopeful efforts at concealment.

By a side road, the driver turned on the box. "You want I should keep right on goin', Mis' Grainger?"

The younger woman answered. "Right on, Jonas. I want Miss Sherfie to see the new peach blossoms on the Chesses' place."

Miss Sherfie smiled. "You're the nicest cousin, Penn! To think of your remembering how I love them!"

"They're going to be wonderful this year, Clara, especially for you." Penn Grainger laid her small, smooth hand over Clara's. She raised her head quickly. Off to the south a bugle sounded, faint but sweet.

Clara sniffed. "Ugh! Yankees! And camped right in our own fields!"

The carriage halted. Clara looked past the box questioningly. Then she shook her parasol, calling, "Go away! Go away at once!"

Some twenty yards ahead where the track joined the main highway, a single horseman had halted broadside to the barouche, sitting his mount like a statue. He held a long pole from which a scarlet guidon fluttered, and when the wind caught the bright folds, gold-crossed cannon showed. The man's blue kepi was at a jaunty angle with the chin strap cutting under his lower lip. He wore a bright red shirt with a high collar and his sky-blue breeches were tucked into long dragoon boots.

Jonas turned apologetically. "Can't go ahead till he say so, Mis' Grainger."

Penn said quietly, "I know. General Mitchel's orders."

Clara flounced. "Well! This *is* pretty! And how long must we wait on that person's pleasure, I'd like to know?"

"Until his battery goes by," said Penn. "Ah — here they come."

With a rising jingle, bump, and clank the lead pair of the first piece showed at the mouth of the road, then the swing pair, the wheelers, with the red-shirted drivers handling them expertly. Section by section the battery rolled on, cannoneers erect on the limber chests and caissons, the officers and noncoms pacing their single-mounts beside the teams. The horses' coats shone and the twelve-pounder Napoleons glinted with subdued efficiency.

Penn sat back, watching the procession from under her long dark

lashes. Clara, in spite of herself, stared eagerly. "I've got to say, Penn, that for Yankees they're right handsome men."

Eyes still on the road as though mentally photographing each element that passed, Penn said, "It's Kinnyard's Independent Ohio Battery."

Clara's watery eyes brightened, and her lips rounded into an "Oh!" "Kinnyard's?" she said. "Didn't one of them try to call on you when they were around Murfreesboro?"

"A man named Whipple Sheldon."

Clara looked wistfully at the steady flow of red shirts on the road ahead. Then she set her chin. "I'd like to have been there when you sent him packing! You, Tennessee-born!"

"I didn't," said Penn calmly. "He called two or three times."

"Penn, my *dear*! You *didn't*. And you the widow of a man who'd be fighting for the Confederacy if he'd only lived. From Ohio! Oh, how *could* you!"

Penn sighed. "After all, I could hardly send him away after he'd driven off those stragglers who tried to stop my carriage. And besides — I found that I knew something about his family. He has connections in Kentucky."

"I just can't understand things these days," wailed Clara, raising her hands in despair. "I mean about connections and cousins and things. Good Lord look down! It's bad enough here in Tennessee, but take Kentucky! The three most prominent families — the Clays and the Crittendens and the Breckenridges — why, more have turned Yankee than have stayed where they belonged. Well! A Yankee soldier calling on you. What would there be to talk about — except to tell him to go away?"

A ghost of a smile curved Penn's full lips. "He does the talking. And he says a lot more than he thinks he does."

"But what about?"

"Oh — the Yankee army — and what he's seen of it and what he thinks of it — that sort of thing."

"And you've received him more than once! Penn, you're the beat-
ingest cousin I ever — ooooh!"

A second rider had reined in beside the guidon. He was dressed like the others and yet there was a difference. Somehow the vizor of his kepi was shinier, the red of his shirt more glowing, the down-

pointing chevrons more triumphant. The red stripes that ran down his trousers were bright against the sky-blue and called attention to the mirrorlike perfection of his boots. Broad-shouldered and long-legged, he sat his horse easily and the sun lit up his strong-chinned, handsome face, touched the short dark hair under the tilted kepi.

"Ooh!" said Clara again.

"That is Mr. Whipple Sheldon," said Penn, smiling to herself.

"*That* one? Great day! You never said he looked like that! Pity he doesn't seem to see us." She pinched Penn's wrist gently. "I'm beginning to think he's a beau of yours."

Penn pursed up her lips. "He thinks so, too."

The last caisson jolted past and the guidon galloped off toward the head of the battery. Sheldon gathered his reins, made his horse passage, and followed the guidon.

Two Negroes in cast-off Union clothing slouched past the carriage lugging bundles of firewood. One of them nodded in the direction that Sheldon had gone. "Mighty fine-lookin' top soldier, ain't he?"

The other wagged his head. "M'm — *m'm!* An' *don'* he know it!"

Clara glared at them while Penn laughed softly under her breath.



In the gun-park Whipple Sheldon stood on a pile of hay bales watching the battery settle itself for the night. The horses had been watered at the little creek at the foot of the camp and were tossing their heads as they champed and snuffled at their feed bags. Drivers were busy with hoof picks and grooming kits while the cannoneers broke open hay bales or sluiced buckets of water over the wheels of limber, piece, and caisson.

Whipple took in the unforgettable scent of the park — fresh-strewn hay, the smell of horses, of trampled grass, of sun-warmed canvas as he sat on the topmost bale, chewing a long spear of hay. No regular army inspector could have found fault with the park. The forge, the battery wagon, supply wagons, and the ambulance were precisely aligned to the last fraction of an inch. Behind them were the caissons and, last of all, the four bronze Napoleons.

When the battery had executed its on-right-into-park, each element had settled into its proper place with a minimum of jockeying.

It was a good battery, even an exceptional one. And he knew that he and Kinnyard together had made it so. In fact, looking at it from a strictly impersonal point of view, he could claim even more credit than Kinnyard, who had had to spend so much time struggling with paper work, courts-martial, and, above all, the instruction of a series of utterly hopeless lieutenants who had come and gone since the formation of the battery. Of course, the raw material was superb. Educated, intelligent Ohioans for the most part, many of them classmates of his at Ohio University, with a fair number from Kenyon and Hiram and Oberlin. Still, such personnel could have been ruined by unskilled hands.

A hundred yards away, the battery's founder and commander, Captain Alastair Kinnyard, stood before his tent and watched the bustle about the picket lines. He was a short, wiry man with a keen aquiline face, whose bearing was so unconsciously military that many inspectors had taken him at first glance for a West Pointer. A highly successful lawyer in civil life, he had made artillery his avocation, throwing himself into his new interest so deeply that he had even gone abroad for three summers to spend his vacations at the French artillery school. Something of this experience was reflected in the trim mustache and imperial that marked his firm mouth and chin, in the tilt of his kepi, and in the short, frogged jacket which gave him a foreign flavor.

Now, as he watched the smooth functioning of his command, he wondered if he had been quite wise in making Whipple Sheldon his first sergeant. Of course, there was no doubt at all that Sheldon had played a large part in saving the battery from utter destruction at Bull Run by bringing up the limbers on his own responsibility, under heavy fire and at exactly the right instant. On the long march that followed the transfer to Buell's western army, when he himself had had to be absent so much, Sheldon had coolly disregarded the bumbling lieutenants and had brought the battery intact to its destination. And yet — it was hard to shake off the feeling that much of what Sheldon did was accomplished not so much through skill and knowledge as through a sort of glibness, a slickness. What he did seemed of importance not to the battery, to the army, or to the Union but

only to what would be written down on the service record of one Whipple Sheldon. Perhaps Nick Staples, the solid, hard-working ex-farmer, now chief of the first section, would have been a better choice. Or there was Tom Madden, Sheldon's roommate at college, who was caisson corporal of the third section. Handsome, curly-haired Madden had never done anything spectacular, but neither had he ever done anything that smacked in the least of sloppiness or shiftlessness. He was good at handling men, handling horses, and handling guns and lived, so far as Kinnyard could see, entirely for the battery. Given a job, he thought it carefully through, went at it hard, and wound it up with no loose ends dangling, whether it concerned taking a convoy of caissons to draw ammunition or seeing that every strap and toggle in the section harness was where it belonged and in the condition it should be. Tom Madden was a man to watch, Kinnyard thought. Just the same, if Sheldon ever troubled to apply himself wholeheartedly, without thinking of the battery records and their entries concerning himself, he would go very far indeed. Bugles sounded and Kinnyard turned back to his tent with a shrug. Time would tell.

The drivers and cannoneers, dismissed from formation, broke for their tents, gleefully sniffing the smell of wood smoke that now had an underlying tang of coffee and roasting meat. Whipple strolled down to the third-section drivers' tent where Tom Madden was good-naturedly sparring with one of the wheel drivers. Whipple watched Tom's wide shoulders and long, supple arms weaving and jabbing, noted with approval his deft footwork. Tom was good with his hands, could even make Whipple, three times champion at college, extend himself to the utmost.

Whipple called out and Tom, with a final light jab, broke away and turned to his friend. His hair was rumpled with exertion and his brown eyes, set wide and rather low in a broad forehead, danced with excitement. "Hi, Whip! Say, Joe's getting good. Caught me twice running on the chin."

Whipple laughed. "You can afford that. That chin of yours is tough enough to use for a trail spade. That was good work today, Tom. Old man Kinn's got his eye on you all right."

Tom smoothed down his hair as though trying to flatten out its stubborn curls. "That's what I was afraid of. I'm going to start

loosening the stitches in my chevrons." He caught up his kepi from the tent peg where he had flung it.

"Come on up to the tent while I change," said Whipple, flicking dust from his boots with a red silk handkerchief.

Tom fell into step with him and they walked through the stir of the camp to the tent which rank allotted to the first sergeant. Tom sat on a records chest while Whipple splashed water about. "You know, Whip," he said frowning, "I'd go easy with Mrs. Grainger if I were you. Everyone knows that she's a red-hot Reb, hell-fire and brimstone, double-jointed and snaggle-toothed. You don't want the provost picking you up for associating with the enemy, do you?"

Whipple shrugged his shoulders. "Don't worry about me. I can outtalk any provost in the Army of the Ohio. Oh say, did I tell you my old gentleman's going to be on the Governor's Council? It was in the mail that came in today. Dave Tod yelled for him as soon as he was inaugurated. Guess you and I'll get a chance to cut a few corners now. It'll be like having a telegraph wire right into the Governor's office. Dad thinks a lot of you." He buried his head in a towel.

Tom stretched out his legs and his strong-chinned mouth set obstinately. "I've told you before, Whip, I don't want a damn thing until I'm ready for it. I've seen too many men wearing chicken-guts on their sleeves and captain's bars on their shoulders just because they knew the right boys at Columbus."

Whipple reached over and rumbled Tom's hair. "Hell, you're too modest. Shove yourself along. Don't wait for people to find out that you're good. R'ar back and tell 'em." He slipped into a white shirt, shrugged into a tight-fitting artillery jacket whose blue cloth was piped with scarlet and which ended just above his lean hips. Then he buckled on a shiny, curved saber. "How'll I do? Think this'll scare the Rebs?"

Tom laughed. "Didn't think scaring was what you were after."

"Leave that to me. Good night, Tom." He put on his kepi and walked out into the growing darkness.

The evening was warm, rich with the scent of growing things and a hint of coming rain. A young moon rode up the sky, shone on the two arms of Duck River that lapped the moundlike hill where

the brick house stood. On the porch, Whipple Sheldon sat back in a cane chair and watched the light from the open front door as it glowed softly on Penn Grainger, perched on a cushioned settee with her hands folded in her lap and her small feet very close together.

Whipple lazily twirled his kepi on his finger. "Excuse my interrupting, but isn't that light in your eyes? I could swing the door shut a little."

She said, "It's fine just as it is," and edged the settee farther out into the glow. "And the only thing I've got to say about Secession," she went on, "is that —"

He grinned. "Were we talking about Secession?"

She made an impatient gesture. "You started it."

"Oh, that." He waved carelessly. "I just meant that as a symbol. Now you and I look at it differently, so you see symbolically —"

She cut in quickly. "I wasn't talking in symbols. I say all we want is to be let alone, instead of having you people come down here with your regiments and companies and your Caesar guns."

"You mean Napoleon guns."

"All right, Napoleon, then. Anyway you're telling us we've got to give up our slaves. Is that fair? We live by slavery and your people up there have lived by them a lot more than you'll admit. It was *our* problem. All your orators say so. We've been solving it slowly and we're the only ones who know how. Now you blunder in, ruin half the country and solve nothing. It'll be worse than ever."

Whipple smiled to himself as the light from the door threw her animated face and round slim figure into hazy relief. It was amusing to be talking generalities like this, as though between a Northerner and a Southerner, when all the time it was actually an exchange between a man who was at least presentable and an extremely attractive woman. Gradually, as he planned to handle matters, the whole course of word and thought would take on a more personal trend. He said, "*You* were solving things? Why, you wanted all new land to be slave. You wanted to bring slavery into free states."

She leaned forward, gray eyes shining. "But those were only the radicals and your abolitionists made them that way. Slavery was dying. Your people kept it alive and then tried to force our boys to invade Virginia and Alabama and Georgia and the rest — our own kind and kin. You've brought on a dreadful war just through hatred

and jealousy of the South and you've used as a pretext something that would have been out of existence, quietly and peacefully, in another five or ten years."

Whipple got up quickly and stepped to the door, a pencil and a notebook in his hands. "Just a minute. Do you mind saying all that again?"

She threw back her head. "I'll say it a hundred times a day. You're telling us —" She spoke slowly and distinctly and he wrote in the light from the hall. When she had finished, he said, "Thanks very much. I've got it all down. Of course, one whisk from a mosquito's wing would blow it full of holes. But I can use it."

"Use it?" she asked curiously.

"When I go home."

Her lip curled. "You seem to expect that book to last a long time."

"It won't have to. Look what's happening. Down here we've got nothing in front of us except that weak force at Chattanooga. West, Buell's joining Grant. McClellan's moving through Virginia with more men than there are rocks in the Cumberland River."

She sat straighter. "You seem pretty sure they'll all get where they're going, Mr. Sheldon."

"This time, next time. Don't you see that this war ended the second it started? You fight for the right to secede. All right. But if a state can leave the Union, it can also leave the Confederacy, and that's something you'd have to face if you won, which you won't. You've got a fearfully artificial collection of states."

She rested her round chin in her hand. "Just why were you so interested in taking down what I said?"

"I can use it. I'm getting a commission pretty soon and then I'll ease out of the army and into politics. Stuff like this'll be fine to butter up some of the districts where people are against the war. I can make a dozen speeches out of what you've given me."

She gave a cold little laugh. "So you'll leave the army to get on as best it can?"

"Why not? This won't last long. But when it's over I can use every second I've spent in uniform. My father's got enough say to have had me made a captain right from the start. Not for me. Look at the record I'll have. Up through the ranks. No influence. Mentioned in dispatches at Bull Run. Commissioned in the field — at

least it'll look that way. Why, the newspapers'll scabble for it like speculators at a land sale."

"And that satisfies you?"

He shook his head. "Not yet. I'd like one more good, fat bit for the record. I'd hoped we'd get into something with Mitchel but there were only a few cavalry brushes. A couple of them were hot enough but nothing I can use."

She said dryly, "Is everyone quite as enlightened about the war as you are? I mean, about really getting some good out of it."

"Lord, no! Take Kinnyard. He's got lots of money, went east to Yale and then studied law. He's made a sort of hobby out of artillery, in fact I guess he's one of the best gunners in the country. *But* — he can't go any higher because his battery's independent, isn't a part of a regiment, and so there's no higher grade for him to fill. He'll end up a captain. He might as well have stayed at home."

She got up quickly with a rustle of wide skirts. "What you mean is that he won't *use* anything. Just now, I meant what I said about slavery. To you, it's just something to use. That's what you've done all your life, from what you've told me. You got through college, just skimming the surface because you learn quickly, you're smart enough to figure out short cuts, and because you wanted a degree — it would be useful to you. So far, you've skimmed through the army the same way. Being facile. You value being mentioned at Bull Run, not because you're proud of what you did, but because it got you noticed."

He smiled down at her and she stepped back a little. "Go on," he said.

"I'd only be repeating myself. You made yourself a good horseman because riding seemed a social asset. You soaked yourself in French because it impressed certain kinds of people. So far as I can see, the only real, genuine thing about you is your feeling for your friend, Mr. Madden. *If* he's your friend, you'd better hang onto him. You'll make others fast and lose them faster. You seem terribly sure of yourself about women, but any girl who takes you seriously is an utter idiot."

He chuckled to himself. Now the conversation was getting decidedly personal. He was pleased that she had thought so much about him. "That's better," he said. "Keep it up. You've no idea how

your eyes snap and dance when you're roused up." Somewhere in the house a clock struck nine. He exclaimed in surprise and drew out a fat, gold watch. "Here! It can't be *that* late. No. Look. You're a half hour fast."

She said quietly, "That clock is never wrong."

He held his watch to his ear. "You're sure? This is ticking all right. Lucky I heard that clock. I'll just have time to get back by taps." He bowed from the waist, clicking his heels. "May I call on Tuesday?"

"I'll probably stay in Murfreesboro with my cousin, Miss Sherfie."

He flourished his kepi. "Fine. I'll see you Tuesday, then." He tucked his saber under his arm and ran down the steps.

Penn Grainger came slowly into the wide drawing room beyond the hall. From the corner where a tall clock loomed over a sofa, a pretty colored maid looked anxiously at her. "I do it right, Mis' Grainger? I poked it like you said, first time I seen you clear in the do'way."

"Just right, Phoebe. Now set the hand back where it belongs. It's a nuisance because it'll have to strike all the hours around the dial." She opened a tall secretary. Her slim fingers picked up the sheets that lay there, shifted them to the bright circle of the lamp. As the clock boomed on, her brown head bent over the pages and her soft mouth puckered in thought. Twice she read over the last page: ". . . which brigade is commanded by Colonel John B. Turchin. He is a former Russian officer, name Anglicized from Turchanineff. Colonel Sill's brigade, composed of the 2nd, 3rd, 21st and 33rd Ohio, plus Battery A, 1st Ohio Light Artillery, and Kinnyard's Independent Ohio Battery, is said to be fully as good as Turchin's. Total strength of both, estimated at about 8000 men, but is probably lower than that."

She tapped a quill thoughtfully against her cheek, then wrote carefully. "I had confirmation this evening of the previous report that Buell and Mitchel are much at odds. The former is sluggish and cautious, the latter — his subordinate — is aggressive and bold. There seems little likelihood of a move east."

She folded the sheets carefully, sealed them and addressed the packet to Mrs. George W. Mabry, c/o Col. G. W. Mabry, CSA, Knoxville, Tennessee. She called, "Thomas!"

A tall young Negro stood respectfully in the doorway. She handed him the letter. He nodded. "Same place, Mis' Grainger?"

"The same."

"Care which way I go?"

"No, so long as it's safe."

"Kind of studyin' on hittin' up the Sequatchie a piece."

She raised her fine eyebrows. "You know where to find —" she paused almost imperceptibly — "the right sort of people?"

"Cain't fool me on 'em. Good night, Mis' Grainger."

"Good night, Thomas, and thank you."

Penn threw herself into a deep chair and closed her eyes. The light of the lamp shone down on her long lashes, her tip-tilted nose and short upper lip, sketched out the hollow between her firm breasts in soft shadow. She drew a deep breath. "That Whipple Sheldon! Why does he have to be so handsome?"

When Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel, now Major General, U.S.A., was first told by an aide that his men had nicknamed him "Old Stars," he was grimly amused. There may have been a touch of bitterness, too, in his tight-lipped smile, for that name summed up the years of exhausting, relentless work through which he had driven himself since his retirement from the regular army away back in 1832. From soldiering, he had plunged into astronomy, an almost unknown science in America. Due largely to his own efforts, an observatory, with himself in charge had been built in Cincinnati. His fame had spread over the continent and to Europe, had called him to found another at Albany. It had won him membership in the Royal Astronomical Society of England, an honorary degree at Harvard. His field expanded and he had grown with it, toiling on selflessly and a little impatient of anything that interfered. Then the guns of Fort Sumter, of Bull Run, had flared to dim the brightest planet and Mitchel, West Point trained, had offered himself to the country that had given him so much.

Now, in a little house outside Shelbyville, in Tennessee, a few reminders of his old, true calling lay on his neat work table: a letter from the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich, another from Monsieur Dominique Arago, in Paris, one from Herr Mertz in Munich, a copy of his own book, *Popular Astronomy*. As he paced up and down

the room that served as his office, dictating to a weary-eyed aide, his long, sensitive fingers tapped the covers of that book. He was barely five feet six with a shock of brushed-back iron-gray hair, deep-set, piercing eyes under heavy brows and a grim mouth set in a clean-shaven face. Yet, for all his small stature, there was something leonine about him. Kinnyard, on seeing him for the first time, had described him as a "pint-sized Andy Jackson."

He was dictating rapidly, pausing every now and then to rock back on his heels and sweep a hand over his tight mouth and jutting chin in a quick gesture. "Colonel Sill's Brigade will move out at the same time, following the road south as indicated on the enclosed sketch. It will maintain close contact with Colonel Turchin's brigade and —" He turned quickly. "Who's slamming on the door at this time of night?" he snapped.

The rapping was repeated. Mitchel crossed the room in two strides and opened the door. A red-eyed captain saluted apologetically. "Sorry, sir. Most urgent. From Colonel Sill's Brigade. He's sent a spy over for you to question."

Mitchel frowned. Then he threw back his head. "All right. Send him in. Confound it, Sill better have a good reason for breaking in on me like this."

He stepped to the middle of the room and faced about, hands behind him and eyes snapping. Footsteps echoed along the passage and four troopers appeared, surrounding a lone civilian. Mitchel stared at the prisoner, his eyes bulging.

The captive, a six-footer apparently in his early thirties, stood looking at the general with an expression of courteous resignation. He had a mass of carefully brushed dark hair above a high-boned, bearded face that was both sensitive and strong. His eyes were deep-set, with an intensity that was strangely like Mitchel's own piercing glance. Suddenly that intensity was lightened by an unmistakable twinkle.

Mitchel cleared his throat and snapped to the guard, "You're dismissed." Then he turned to his aide. "I shan't want you for another half hour." The aide crept away. Mitchell slammed the door, flung himself into a chair, and roared with laughter. "Jim Andrews! You confounded old humbug! Why didn't you tell the provost to go to the devil?"

Andrews dropped onto a bench. "Well, it seemed a good idea to do it this way, Ormsby. A smart young artillery top sergeant picked me up. A damned cocky devil named Whipple Sheldon. I demanded to be brought to you. By dawn it'll be all over Bedford County and points south that your bedizened Yankee satraps brutally arrested a Virginian going about his legitimate affairs."

Mitchel looked keenly at him. "You really think you're riding handsome with the Secesh?"

"I'm quite sure — so far. I made a few tolerably seditious speeches around Nashville and a good many Union people up there'd be glad to hang me. I brought some highly confidential letters to disaffected parties inside your lines. I've got copies for you, of course. Also, I've a few verbal messages for Beauregard, mostly appeals for help to chase you out of Tennessee."

"To old Bory, eh? That's easy. I'll slip you through our lines and you can whisper all your little messages to him. Have a drink?"

Andrews shook his head. "I don't drink when I'm working, you know."

"And you're always working?"

"Until the Union's restored, Ormsby. And about passing me on to Beauregard — well, I'd rather wait a little. I've something else in my mind and I'll need your help on it."

Mitchel ran his fingers through his hair. "I'm afraid that'll have to wait, Jim. I'm moving south. Just dictated the orders for it when you came in. I'm going to smash that east-west railroad down in Alabama. I'll hit it at Huntsville and then fan out east to Chattanooga. It'll tie Reb transportation up into knots."

Andrews sprang to his feet, eyes glowing. "Get out your map! We've been working on the same thing without realizing it."

Mitchel unrolled a vast map that hung on the wall, a map that was crisscrossed with spidery lines in red and blue. Andrews strode to it. "Now look at these railroad lines, Ormsby. Here's Richmond, way up here in Virginia. Follow the railroad that goes southwest through Tennessee into Alabama and then up to Memphis. That's the one you'll smash at Huntsville, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Mitchel, frowning at the map.

"Well, when you hit Chattanooga — see how all those lines head

in there? — the Rebs'll feel the loss of that town mighty bad. They'll rush a lot of troops up from Georgia and the Carolinas, enough to chase you out."

Mitchel shook his head. "I'm not planning to hold Chattanooga. I'll snap in quick, wreck things, and get out. That wreckage of track and trains'll bother your friend Beauregard off to the west a whole lot. He won't be able to get anything from the east for a long, long time, and he'll need 'em bad. So that's my plan. Into Chattanooga and out."

"You won't have to get out, because I'll be doing a few things myself." Andrews laid a finger on Atlanta, Georgia. "Look at this line north and west. See? It goes on and joins the Richmond-Memphis line at Chattanooga. Now, *if* this Chattanooga-Atlanta stretch were badly jammed, just when you were moving east — how about that?"

Mitchel's eyes narrowed to two bright slits and his long fingers scraped over his chin. "You've got it. You've got it," he whispered. "We'd paralyze Beauregard. It'd leave him nothing but Corinth, way over in the west, for a base. Wait a minute. There's more than that."

Andrews nodded. "I knew you'd see it. We'd *hold* Chattanooga and at the same time wreck that Atlanta line. The only way the Rebs could get troops to use against us for a long time would be from Virginia and they're too busy up there."

"Of course. Then — then —" Mitchel's voice quickened. "Then Buell'd have to detach enough men to guarantee my position. We'd free all of East Tennessee. We could invade Georgia. Or we could hit right up into the Reb rear in Virginia." He turned away suddenly, his shoulders sagging. "No use, Jim. I haven't got the men to spare for the wrecking job. And if I had, Buell's so slow that I'd be turning command over to my unborn grandson before he'd do anything."

"You don't need troops. That's where I come in. *I'll* see to jamming that line."

Mitchel stared. "How?"

"I'll show you." He dropped his voice and talked steadily on, his finger hovering over the line that ran from Atlanta northwest

through Marietta, Big Shanty, on across Georgia, through Kingston and Dalton and Ringgold and over the Tennessee border to Chattanooga. Mitchel listened intently, nodding from time to time.

Along the picket line, horses stamped and snorted in the dawn freshness, their shadows grotesquely elongated by the horizontal rays of the sun. The drivers chattered to their horses as they examined hoofs for loose shoes or mumbled in early morning irritability over swollen hocks or scratches.

Ordinarily this was the time of day that Whipple loved best. There was the smell of the new day, the slow-growing light, the glint of the waters of Duck River, and the steady breeze through the poplars. No smell, he thought, was ever sweeter than the mixture of hay, clean horseflesh, wood smoke, and the rich promise of coffee and bacon.

This morning, however, he was aware of a gnawing uneasiness. It wasn't that Penn Grainger might have been serious in saying that she was going to Murfreesboro. If he didn't see her one day, he would see her the next. Could it arise from the remark that he made to her, his statement that he needed something striking to add to his record? It might be that. Such a statement might produce a bad impression on her. Of course, if more active service was in the offing, he would naturally see it through. He shoved his kepi back over his short dark hair. He'd have to clarify all that when he saw Penn again. Perhaps she didn't understand that, even if he did go, it would be a wrench to leave the battery and the many men, from Kinnyard down, for whom he felt a sincere and genuine friendship. Tom, of course, now Tom was different. Any plan that benefited Whipple Sheldon would have to do as much for Tom Madden.

Someone called his name and he saw an orderly running toward him. Whipple said patiently, "What's troubling you, son?"

The orderly, a gangling, pimply boy, panted, "Cap's gone to Sill's for the day. Loot Falvey's in charge and he wants you."

Whipple jumped down from his perch on the hay bales. "What's he want now? Trying to find out which end of a gun shoots?" He called to Nick Staples, a rawboned farmer from Ashtabula County and senior sergeant. "Take over, Nick. Falvey's setting up a yipe about something."

Lieutenant John Falvey was a tall, stoop-shouldered man with a high voice and an air of being perpetually surprised at finding himself an officer. He was sitting on a camp chair by his tent as Whipple came up the slope, surveying a folded paper hopelessly. He brightened as he saw Whipple. "Oh, look, Sergeant, I don't know what to do about this." He flapped the paper. "Captain's gone."

Whipple took it from him. It was addressed to Kinnyard and marked "Pressing and Confidential." Whipple said, "Go on and open it. You're in command."

Falvey plucked at his lower lip. "Everything in the army's so complicated. I don't know what to do."

"I'll open it," said Whipple.

Falvey gave a little bleat of relief. "Will you? Only don't let Captain know I gave it to you. Just act like it came right to you."

Whipple nodded and walked away to his tent, where he broke the seal. He read the first line and his face set as the sentences jumped at him in disconnected blocks. "On receipt of this, you will at once select two volunteers for an extremely hazardous and important mission . . . will report without arms . . . fullest instructions will be issued . . . no entry other than 'detached service' to be set against their names . . ." At the bottom was Ormsby M. Mitchel's flowing signature.

Whipple stared at the sheet, rubbing his square chin. Then he jumped up. "Holy Jumping Moses! This is the chance I've been after! Kinn'd raise hell, but he's away. I'll write the order and Falvey'll sign it if I have to hold his head under water. 'Hazardous and important!' Old Stars, you've got your volunteers!" He stepped to the door of the tent. The men, dismissed from stables, were trailing up the battery street. Whipple waved. "Tom! Hi, Tom! Get up here fast as God'll let you!"

A stiff wind had sprung up at sunset, rolling angry clouds into the west where they massed scarlet and black and sullen orange. Whipple and Tom, barely recognizable in broad hats and shapeless civilian homespun, bought hastily at Shelbyville, turned to look back at the camp of Kinnyard's battery where bugles were sounding Retreat. By the picket line, the guard was standing to attention while the battery, drawn up in the street, stiffened to a blue and red rope. Whipple felt

an unexpected sinking sensation. He wanted to be back with the sections. "What the hell am I doing this for?" he thought.

By his side, Tom said huskily, "That's one swell outfit, Whip."

Whipple squared his shoulders, settled about his throat the red silk handkerchief that gave the one spot of color to his drab clothes.

"But they're rotting, Tom. Nothing's happening. We'll do ourselves a lot more good, going where we're going. We're going out where things are busting. Come on."

Tom strode along beside Whipple. "And maybe we'll be the things that get busted. God damn it, Whip, this is the looniest layout I ever heard of. We buy civilian clothes and start out, looking like a couple of scarecrow's mistakes. And what for? To hit down the road until we find a man named James J. Andrews."

Whipple laughed. "You just trust your Uncle Whip. Finding him like this is sort of a test, I figure. Old Stars is no loon."

Tom hunched his shoulders. "Just the same, this is something I'd rather hear about someone else doing."

Darkness set in swiftly as the clouds thickened over the War Trace road where deep woods intensified the gloom. The way seemed empty. Thunder muttered through the leaden clouds and a few spats of rain fell. Tom said, "I'm beginning to like this a hell of a lot less. How about taking a cast through the trees?"

"He'll be right on the road," said Whipple confidently. "Don't worry. I'll find him for you."

"Let's each take a side of the road and go about ten yards in among the trees," Tom suggested.

"He'll be on the road, I tell you," said Whipple. Thunder volleyed louder on the heels of a splitting dart of lightning. Rain began to drill down steadily.

"I love rain. I love this job. I love getting lost in the woods," chanted Tom. "And don't I love a top sergeant who talked me into this!"

There was another, heavier thunderclap, a wicked sheet of lightning. On the heels of the din, a voice called from the edge of the woods, "Hey, Redlegs! Where you going?"

Tom and Whipple stopped short. Whipple snapped, "Who are you? What makes you think we're artillery?"

"I'm Marion Ross, sergeant major, 2nd Ohio. Recognized you in

the lightning. Seen you a few times at division. Better get in here unless you're chucking in your papers and going home."

Whipple and Tom scuffled in among dripping bushes where a powerfully built man showed in the darkness. Beyond him, Tom made out a lighter stretch, obviously a clearing where more shapes moved. He asked, "How'd you find this place, Ross?"

"Got a plat of the township at the courthouse and saw this was about the only place near the road where folks could meet," Ross said. "I've been steering the boys in here from the road. Must have missed you when you went past for the first time. A lot of 'em found it for themselves. Came right through the woods."

Tom nudged Whipple. "I ain't saying a thing, mister."

"Go to hell," grunted Whipple. "Andrews here yet?"

"Ain't seen him," answered Ross. "But that don't mean he's far off."

A voice to the left called, clear and ringing. "Form a circle right out in the middle, boys." A tall, erect figure, cloak-muffled and broad hat pulled down over the eyes, strode to the center of the clearing.

Ross whispered, "It's him."

Whipple took a quick step forward, staring. Then he pulled Tom to one side. "By God, is *that* Andrews? Well, I tell you he's that spy I pulled in last night coming home from Mrs. Grainger's. Out-and-out Reb spy posing as a pack peddler. I grabbed him and dragged him to the provost and he put up a holler to see Mitchel and the damn fools took him along. He's fooled Old Stars all right, but he hasn't fooled me. We'll trail this job right through and bust up whatever plans he has."

Andrews swept off his hat, threw back his head and stood there, a fine, dominant figure. He began to speak and something in his tone sent a tingle along Tom's spine.

"A lot of you boys have known me before. The rest of you'll know me well long before you get back to your commands." He paused. The lightning had died away, the wind was still, and a tight hush fell over the clearing, broken only by the crunch of shifting feet and the drip of the slackening rain.

Andrews went on. "We've got a big job, a hard job, ahead of us. There's one main railroad running from Richmond up in Virginia right through to Corinth in Mississippi and beyond. General Mitchel

starts tomorrow to cut that line at Huntsville in Alabama, due south of Shelbyville. Is that clear so far?"

There was a murmur of assent. Whipple found that he had taken a step forward, that his hands were tightly clenched. He braced himself almost angrily against the magnetism of the man. Somewhere, far off in the night, a dog began to howl, eerie and mournful. Andrews continued.

"Now for our own part. There's a weak Rebel force under Leadbetter at Chattanooga where this same east-west line comes down. Up in Knoxville, Kirby Smith's not much stronger. But —" he struck his hands together and raised his voice — "but they could both be reinforced from the coast over the Western and Atlantic Railroad that runs up through Georgia to Chattanooga." His jaw snapped. "We're going to see that they won't be reinforced or supplied for a long, long time. Then General Mitchel will move east from Huntsville, take Chattanooga; he'll be given more troops so he can either go north to Knoxville or keep on east into Georgia. If he does the first, he'll not only free the thousands of Union people in East Tennessee, but he'll be right close to the Rebel rear in Virginia. If it's Georgia, well, he'll turn the whole war inside out. That's all you need to know so far — that we're going to do something to that railroad line. Are the engineers I asked for here? Wilson Brown and Will Knight?" Two men answered from the circle. "Good," said Andrews. "Got your firemen?"

Someone said, "Joe Kane ain't showed up, but I used to be a tallow pot myself. I'll fire."

Andrews made a quick gesture. "Come closer. All of you."

Tom moved with the others, his mouth dry and his eyes fixed on Andrews. Andrews went on. "Your first instructions. Break into small groups and hit over the Cumberlands and then south to the Tennessee River. Cross the river at the Shellmound station and buy tickets for Marietta, Georgia."

There was a stunned silence. A man said uncertainly, "To *where*?"

"I said, to Marietta, in Georgia. To the heart of the Confederacy." A hint of laughter came into Andrews's voice. "Those who object to such a long trip on the cars may drop out now."

Tom looked about the circle, dazed. Into Reb territory! Deep! He moistened his lips, nervously noted that there was movement here

and there as though men were slipping away. Far off, the dog kept up his clamor on some dark hillside.

"As to time," Andrews went on calmly, "this is Monday, April seventh. By Thursday, the tenth, you've got to be in Chattanooga not later than five in the afternoon to get the last down train for Marietta. When you get to Marietta, go right to the Tremont House by the station. The whole party will gather there and get its last instructions. Any questions?"

Whipple, still fighting off Andrews's undoubted spell, asked, "If we run into other groups on the way, should we recognize them?"

"A good question. It will be best not to. Also, you may see me from time to time, perhaps in very odd company. Don't even look at me."

Across the circle a man said, "I've traveled through the South before the war. On the roads or in the cars, folks ask questions of a stranger like corn popping. What'll we say?"

"I was coming to that. You're all from Kentucky, escaping from Yankee rule. You'd better say you're from Fleming County. That's been my home ever since I left Virginia and I can tell you you'll meet no one from Fleming. It's solid Union."

Tom stirred uneasily. "What if they call our bluff?"

"Then don't hesitate to enlist. There'll be no charge of desertion brought against you. General Mitchel has arranged all that."

Whipple said, "We've got no papers. Will the Rebs take us without them?"

Andrews laughed. "Don't worry about that. They're even taking men out of jail to fill up their regiments. You may have more trouble keeping *out* of the Reb army than getting into it."

Ross spoke up gravely. "Let's look at the worst side. Suppose our stories break down. What's our status?"

Andrews came a pace nearer. "Technically, they could shoot or even hang you for being out of uniform in enemy lines. But on the other hand, we hold a lot of Rebs caught raiding out of uniform, a good two thousand. So far, we're treating them as prisoners of war and that's heavily in your favor. But here's one safeguard. Actually, you did volunteer for this and legally that puts you out of the prisoner-of-war class. *But* you didn't know what you volunteered for. You still don't know the whole story. If you're ever caught under questioning, you must stick to that. You're soldiers acting under

orders and hence not responsible. That's military law. I've moved freely through the Confederacy and see little danger so long as you use common sense." He lifted his hand as though in benediction. "Good night, gentlemen, and thank you. We meet in Marietta." He strode away. As he reached the nearest trees the wind sprang up, driving sheets of rain ahead of it. Then darkness rushed in. The lost dog still howled to the night and the storm. Tom thought of his dry tent. Whipple caught his arm in the dark. "Come on, Tom. Let's get started. We can beat the whole crowd to Marietta."

Tom stumbled on beside Whipple. "And what'll happen then? What the hell did you get me into this for? It didn't seem so bad so long as I could see him and hear him. But what are we going to do? How many of us are there? I'd say twenty-five at the most. How are we going to stop Jeff Davis from sending the whole God-damn Reb army to Chattanooga?"

Whipple shook his head as he squelched along. "There's something rotten about this. He's a Reb spy. I haven't figured out just what he's up to yet. But we'll trail along and throw a spike into whatever he's planning, because it's something damn bad."

"By God, I bet you're wrong!" said Tom.

"Just think through your questions. What can we *do* at Marietta? Get into the station and tear up all the tickets so the Rebs can't ride on the trains? If Andrews had said that, most of those jug-heads back there would have swallowed it. And there's another thing. Notice how, when he was talking about getting caught, he always said 'you' and never 'we'?"

"Sure. If *he* gets caught, they'd just string him up."

"That's what *he* says. No, sir! He's all wrong and we're going to catch him tripping. He's managed to fool Mitchel, but not me."

They cleared the woods and turned east toward the black clouds. Tom sighed. "If you're right or if you're wrong, it's still a hell of a job. Let's get on with it. Hey — someone ahead there."

Two men beyond them stopped and a voice called, "That you, Redlegs?"

Whipple answered, "Ross? How'd you get ahead of us?"

"Followed a path that turned out here." Ross slowly materialized as Whipple and Tom drew nearer. A smaller man whose spectacles glinted in the dark stood beside him. Ross went on. "This is Will

Pittenger, G Company, 2nd Ohio. He's correspondent for the *Steubenville Herald* back home. Will, this is Whipple Sheldon, a Redleg out of Kinnyard's battery."

Pittenger, slight and stoop-shouldered, peered through the dark. "Any kin to 'Strike' Sheldon, the California one?"

"He's my father, made his pile and kept it. Be sure and get his name straight, and mine, when you send your story of this to the *Herald*. Do you know Tom Madden, here? You ought to. His father's president of the Trust Company of the Scioto Valley and a trustee of about every college in the state."

Pittenger said eagerly, "Not Marcus Madden? The one who's always raising money for libraries? Sure, I know who *he* is. I was a schoolteacher before I joined up and any teacher —"

Ross rumbled through his beard, "Let's get going. A lot of miles stacked up between here and Marietta."

Whipple fell into step with Ross while Tom and Pittenger followed on. Whipple said, "You know much about this Andrews?"

"Some. Ran into him when we were in Kentucky. He's all right."

"Oh, of course he is. Seems to have this well planned."

Ross pulled at his beard. "He don't miss much. But they's two points that make my back teeth ache. I don't know more'n you do what we're aiming for, except it's got something to do with soldiers and railroads. Now, Andrews ain't a railroad man and he ain't a soldier. But I ain't really worried. He's a man you can trust. I'd follow him blind on foot through the Falls of the Ohio."

"That's the way he struck me," said Whipple. "Now let's get this march organized. It's late as hell. We'll keep an eye out for a light or a roof and hit for shelter. If we find slavers, all the better, because it'll give us a chance to practice our stories. If we find Union, we'll still practice."

Rain fell, slackened, fell again. Four pairs of eyes probed the darkness for a place to shelter but the miles and hours dragged on, marked only by the drill of the rain and the squelch of boots. At last Whipple exclaimed, "Here we are. Follow me." He struck out across a sopping field where an uneven roof line showed against the sky. As he came nearer he made out two small cabins joined by a covered porch. He dropped back to Tom's side and whispered, "You tell Will anything about what I know about Andrews?"

"Not a crumb, and besides, you don't know anything."

"I'm sure enough," grunted Whipple. "Will, you hammer on the door. You look like a preacher and won't scare whoever opens."

Pittenger rapped sharply. There was a flare from inside. The door of the right-hand cabin opened on a lean, bearded old man in ragged shirt and breeches, holding a pine torch high. Whipple stepped past Pittenger. "Can you shelter us? We're lost on the road."

The old man said gravely, "Reckon so," and threw open the door of the second cabin, where wood was stacked about a fireplace. "Burn what you need. Leave what you don't."

The four tramped in after him and Tom started a hot, economical fire. Ross plunged into his story at once, dilating on the sufferings of good State-rights and slavery men in Kentucky, breaking off as Whipple covertly kicked his ankle. The old man set his torch in a crude iron holder and faced Ross. "Goin' to enlist in Georgia? You're plumb haig-rid. You'd best hit back home. Abraham Lincoln'll smoke out the viper's nest afore you've bit a cartridge." He lifted a gnarled hand. "Look in the Book. 'Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye be the children of them as killed the prophets. Ye sarpints, ye generation of vipers —'"

Whipple laughed, "All right, Dad. You'll do for Sunday school. But why'd you take us in if you're for the damn Yanks? Sure God we aren't."

The reply was calm. "I got a roof and you ain't. Sleep good." He closed the door and his feet pattered across the covered porch.

Will Pittenger held out his hands to the blaze. "I figured he was sound. We'll strike a lot like him through here."

"Can't count on it," said Ross. "Whip, what the hell you kick me for? I was talking out good."

Whipple shook his head. "Too good. You were talking Reb-er than any Reb who ever lived. Pitch it down. Let them do the talking, as soon as we've answered their questions."

"By God, I had *him* fooled," growled Ross.

"Why not? You can fool a man with a stuffed dog, but you'll never fool a real dog. From now on, I'll do the talking. You others just grin and look sappy."

Tom glanced quickly at the big sergeant major, thinking that he might resent such curt advice from a first sergeant. But Ross merely

nodded. "That's good figuring. You waggle your jaw and we'll back you up. Will, get out the coffee. I got bacon and hardtack in my haversack."

After a few hours' sleep, Whipple woke. The room, where the three others still slept, was chill and stale. He threw open the door and drew in great draughts of wet, fresh air, rejoicing at his ability to shake off sleep the instant he was awake. Then he stirred up his companions. "On your feet! First call's blown. Up, Tom! It's pay-day. Will! School bell's ringing. Never mind eating. We'll do that later. Christ, this is Tuesday and we're due in Chattanooga Thursday."

All through the morning they labored on through fitful showers. The trail shrank, then suddenly widened to a road that wound away over flat, empty country. Then it became a trail again and wove through ravinelike valleys where swollen creeks roared. Once Tom, working along a slope that was abristle with second-growth oaks, saw the charred ruins of a house that reeked of embers not long cold. There were marks of many hoofs in the soft turf. Ross growled, "Union people, burned out by the Rebs. Saw a lot of folk like that in Kentucky. Refugees come in by the dozen and twenties. On foot all the way and dasn't light fires at night. The Rebs had patrols out, rounding up all such and turning them back. Done some shooting too. Made our boys kind of mad."

When night fell, they had barely reached the Old Stone Fort, raised by unknown hands in an unknown past, miles short of the town that Whipple had picked. He shook his head angrily. "Just means we got to make up the time tomorrow. Lights off to the right. Big place. Let's hit for it and for God's sake tighten up your brains. These people will be real Rebs."

There was a big, rambling house, a huddle of slave quarters with barns and carriage houses beyond. On the porch, a bent, elderly man stared at the group in suspicion until Whipple told his story in sparse sentences. Then they were at once transported to a new world of warm rooms, bright fires, and a loaded table. Negroes dried their clothes, served them with hot, thick soup in which toast crusts floated, with roast beef, with mounds of hot biscuits and puddings rich with plums and cream.

The old man stood on the hearth, watching them with deep contentment. "My son," he said, "would have been proud to receive you. Perhaps you know of him. Captain Raphael Fentress of the Cumberland Dragoons. Oh — I understand. It's all so vast. He's in Virginia with Magruder. Now tell me how I can help you on your way."

In the morning their host was up before them, clucking and fussing over a collection of old game bags that bulged with food. He shook Tom's hand warmly as he handed him his sack. "God bless you. Don't forget about my son. I've written his name down for you." The worn old eyes looked up appealingly and Tom felt suddenly sick. He mumbled, "Really, sir, we don't need all this. That bag's your son's. He'll want it when he comes back."

But the old man still persisted. "No. No. It's a pleasure, a privilege."

As the party struck east again, Tom muttered, "Hell, I felt like telling him we weren't Rebs after all."

Ross said, "I'd rather raise my own rations and sleep in a barn. Don't like fooling people — good people — like that."

"Shut up," said Whipple. "Anyone who gives us what we can use is good. Now step it out. We're due in Chattanooga."

Dusk was falling as they limped into Hillsboro. A few lights were glowing along the straggly main street. Wagons plowed dispiritedly through the mud. Will Pittenger caught Tom's arm. "Keep your eyes ahead. There's George Wilson of the 2nd, there with the old silk hat. That's Perry Shadrack, K Company, and I think that's Sam Slavens of the 33rd with him."

Tom nodded. "I know. Won't even look at 'em, but — hey! By the saloon!"

"I know. Just a Reb major. Does give you a start to see 'em close to like that."

"Reb be damned. See who's with him!"

Arm in arm with the officer walked James Andrews, immaculate in broadcloth and glossy silk hat. The pair strode rapidly on, turned a corner, and were out of sight.

Tom wiped his forehead. "My God! Arm in arm with a Reb who may have a nice hangman's noose in his pocket! Well, if he can do that, I guess I'll be able to keep on this way."

The next morning by Gizzard Cove they turned east, climbed another fifteen hundred feet, crossed the bare plateau of Fullerton's Bluff and, in early afternoon, dropped abruptly near the little town of Jasper.

Whipple said, "End of the line, boys. All out. Now we'll swing right down to the Tennessee River ferry. That way we won't have to cross the Sequatchie at all."

An hour later they stood on a low ridge looking down, tight-jawed, at the Tennessee. The great river was in full spate again. Directly in front of them the waters swirled in yellow foam against the base of a hut on the near bank. Up by the flats to the left, where the Sequatchie emptied into the Tennessee, a whole island of uprooted trees turned sluggishly where the two currents met.

"It'll end up in the Ohio River," said Tom mournfully. "How do we get across, Whip?"

"Damned if I know, but we've got to."

Pittenger said, "If we can't get across, neither can Andrews."

Whipple got to his feet. "No! We're going to beat Andrews and all the others to Marietta." He looked about, rubbing his hands on his trousers. "You wait here. I'm going back to Jasper." He set off at a brisk trot.

Marion Ross watched him dubiously. "What's he going to do? Buy a bridge for us?"

Tom hitched at his trousers. "You don't know Whip. When he gets his jaw set like that, he gets what he wants if he has to push over a mountain."

When Whipple came into Jasper, he strode panting into a grocery where a few men drank dully at a bar. They laughed at his questions. One of them said, "Maybe you kin pay an eagle to fly you over, bub, but that's the only way."

Whipple flung out into the street. Out of a feed store stamped a red-faced officer in gray. He roared over his shoulder. "How the hell am I going to get those bales onto my wagons? Think *I'm* going to tote 'em?" The reply from within was scarcely audible but seemingly adequate. The officer slammed his hat on and stamped down the steps. His eye caught a Negro holding a saddled horse across the street. "You, nigger! Come here and load my bales."

The Negro mumbled. "Sorry, suh. I'se Mr. Nangle's Adam. I'se waitin' fo' him, suh."

The officer raised his fists to the sky. "Those bales! I got to —"

Whipple stepped to him. "You need help, sir?"

"What the hell you think I need? God-damn curdled bird seed? My detail didn't show up. Burns won't lend a hand and my drivers have run away!"

"You won't need them. I've got three friends down by the river. I'll get them and we'll help you load."

The officer looked sharply at him. "Why aren't you in the army?"

"That's what we're here for." Whipple told his story quickly.

The other exploded with relief. "Get them up here. Four wagons behind Burns's. And I can enlist you right now. Quartermaster Corps."

"Glad to serve under you. Only, we're a gun crew. We trained with the Home Guards until Lincoln broke his word and moved troops into the state. We heard gunners were needed here."

"Better yet. I'll give you a letter to the recruiting officer and I'll get credit for you. Get your men. I'll pay you teamsters' wages."

"No need, sir. All we want's to get as close as we can to Chattanooga."

"Where the hell do you think I'm going? This hay's for General Leadbetter's horses."

"Stay right where you are," said Whipple. "You're practically loaded right now." He raced off down the street.

The down train trundled slowly out of Chattanooga and clanked over the flats that lay under the thousand-foot nose of Missionary Ridge. In the last coach Tom stared out at the upsweeping hills to right and left, lit up by a watery sunset. He tried to relax but each click of the wheels, rolling inexorably south, beat against his brain. He felt vague and unreal and his mind was incapable of action. "Floaty," he thought, "that's how I feel. Floaty." He looked up the car. Ross and Pittenger shared a seat but nothing could be told from their attitudes. Near the forward door, Whipple seemed to be carrying on an animated conversation with a well-dressed plantation owner. Tom sighed enviously. Whip certainly was slick as lard, chatting away with that Reb as though the two had sucked molasses through the same straw when they were kids!

The stations hitched past in slow procession through growing darkness. Boyce, then Ringgold, Tunnel Hill where the train dove into the heart of Rocky Face and clouds of wood smoke swept through the car, Dalton . . . The car flooded with light and Tom sat up with a jerk. He had slept and in that time the conductor had lighted the oil lamps. The train had stopped and someone was bawling, "Change cars for the Rome branch. Kingston! Kingston! Change here for Rome!"

There were lights in the Kingston station, a buzz of voices on the platform as people shuffled up and down. Tom felt even more alone and desolate. His breath drew in sharply as a wiry man in a gray cavalry jacket dropped beside him, kicking a bulging haversack under the seat. Raveled sergeants' stripes showed on his sleeve. He looked at Tom appraisingly. "Goin' to tie up with an outfit, friend?"

"Aim to," said Tom huskily.

"Better hurry or you won't have nothin' to tie to. Beauregard and Al Johnston, they just naturally kicked the tar out'n Grant's Yanks up the Tennessee. It's on the telegraph. Do say as how Grant got rooted right back into Kentucky."

Tom rallied himself. "Wish they'd stay out of Kentucky. We've had about enough trouble there. Still, I guess it'll last long enough for me to get in a few licks."

"I reckon. I ain't hurryin' back from leave. Got me a harness shop to Atlanta that my cousin Fred's been tendin' and he ain't done too good with it." He talked on about his shop, his cousins and his brothers, about an uncle who had a four-slave farm near Nickajack across the Chattahoochee.

Gradually Tom's tension eased. The sergeant had taken him at face value. He listened, nodding from time to time. Outside in the night, Cartersville slid past. There was the rumble of the bridge over the Etowah River, then Acworth and Big Shanty in the lee of Kennesaw Mountain.

Tom began to sweat and felt his hands trembling. The conductor was shouting, "Marietta! Marietta!" He gulped out a good-by and stumbled past the sergeant. Down the car, Whipple was shaking hands warmly with the planter. Tom wove on like a sleepwalker and dropped to the platform. There was a wail of, "All a-boooard!" and the train chuffed away toward Atlanta, its lights vanishing around a spur of a hill. Tom felt utterly alone and helpless.

He jammed his hat tighter on his head. "God, if I didn't feel so floaty. I'm not going to be any good to anyone. Where the hell did Whip and the others get to?" He braced himself. There was a hotel somewhere near the station that Andrews had mentioned as a meeting place.

He walked toward the nearest lights. When he made out the sign "Tremont House" he felt a return of confidence and marched up the splintery wooden steps to the office where a red-eyed clerk dozed behind a rough counter. Tom paid his money, took the key that was sleepily given him, and climbed dirty stairs to a corridor. As he hunted his number he was sure that one or two doors opened as he passed, was sure that curious eyes watched him. He ducked into the shelter of his room, slid the latch, and lit the lamp that stood by the bed. Then he sat on his corn-husk mattress and stared at the blank wall opposite, wondering, "Now what the hell do I do?"

To pass the time, he carefully counted the money that he had drawn at headquarters prior to starting out. He paced up and down the room a few times, counted his money twice over. It still came to the same amount—forty-two dollars and seventeen cents, about equally divided between United States and Confederate currency and bills.

He turned suddenly as footsteps creaked outside. A careful hand tried the latch. Tom drew his derringer and flung open the door. Whipple strode in, Marion Ross clumping behind him. Tom wiped his forehead. "Blow a whistle the next time you try that. How'd I know you weren't a Reb provost?"

Whipple waved blandly. "Don't get so jumpy. Where've you been? I lost you at the train."

"I got out the other door," said Tom.

Whipple tossed his hat onto the bed and ran his fingers through his smooth black hair. "Well, anyway, I'm glad you decided to join us after all."

"Decided?" said Tom gloomily. "Any deciding about this whole damn trip was done by you, not me." He looked at Ross. "Sit down, Marion. Where's Will?"

"Snoring next door," said Ross. "This is the right place. Sam Slavens of the 33rd and Johnny Scott of the 21st are right down the hall. Perry Shadrack and George Wilson are across from you."

"This is right. Nothing righter," said Whipple. He yawned and stretched. "Good whiskey at the Kennesaw bar. Had a drink with a Reb who's raising a battery. He'll pay us fifty, U. S. money, for signing up. Got some news, too. That scrap at Shiloh wasn't as bad as it sounded at first. Seems we rallied and chased the Rebs back and they lost General Johnston. The loot who's raising the battery and I got pretty mournful about it all."

Ross chafed his big hands. "That's all right about the battle, but Andrews has got me jiggety. He said he'd be here today and that we'd do what we come to do tomorrow."

Whipple glanced at Tom. "He's got his reasons."

"But tomorrow's Friday," persisted Ross. "That's the day Old Stars was going to grab Huntsville and the railroad up there. That has something to do with us down here."

"Andrews has got his reasons," repeated Whipple. "There's no down train from Chattanooga till tomorrow noon. We'd better get some sleep. I'm just across the hall, Tom."

Ross got up. "Won't Jim Andrews get a surprise when he gets here and finds us sitting like frogs on a lily pad!"

Whipple slapped his shoulder. "A whole lot of things are going to surprise Mr. James J. Andrews, Marion. We'll show him."

Late as it was, a light still burned in the brick house between the two tributary arms of Duck River, near War Trace. In the broad living room, Penn Grainger wrote busily at the secretary. Her soft lips were compressed and her round chin was set, matching the frown that shadowed her forehead. She might have been a schoolgirl intent on an elegant essay on *Guy Mannering*. Her round white arm, bare to the elbow, moved evenly as her pen slid on.

. . . as I wrote you, General Mitchel has moved south with a force of about two thousand. From all I hear, his pace is amazing, floods and storms not seeming to hamper him. Our friend, Mr. James Andrews, whom your husband will remember meeting with General Kirby Smith, left these parts on Monday, taking with him about twenty or twenty-five Yankee volunteers. I do not know the reason for this strange step of his, but feel that you should warn the right sort of people along the Georgia-Carolina border, to be on the lookout for him to help him if they can. . . .

When she had finished, she addressed the letter to Mrs. George W. Mabry at Knoxville and gave it to a spare, sallow man in farm clothes who waited outside. Then she sighed and leaned back in her chair, tapping her quill against her lips. The Andrews matter puzzled her in more ways than one. Among other things, Kinnyard's handsome first sergeant had not called on Tuesday as he had said he would. Why not? He couldn't have gone off with Andrews. Such mysterious doings were hardly the type to attract him. And yet —

She looked up with a quick smile as her cousin, Clara Sherfie, swept into the room, her faded angularity accentuated by a coquetish negligee. She shook a finger at Penn. "I declare, if you aren't the busiest bee I ever did know! Do you realize it's past eleven?" She sank onto the sofa.

Penn quickly spread a shawl over Clara's thin shoulders. "Just a letter to Jeanette Mabry, dear."

"Couldn't you have done it tomorrow? Sakes, this *is* the oddest house. Folks riding up in the night, niggers slipping in to tell you about wagons heading south to the Alabama line!"

Penn said gravely, "Our people in Knoxville have to know what's happening here and sometimes we have to use odd ways, what with all the Yankees swarming around."

"Of course, Penn darling. It's all for the South. I admit I was right put out when you didn't come up to Murfreesboro on Tuesday, but when I thought a little I knew something like this had kept you."

Penn turned her head to hide a rising tinge of color in her cheeks. Clara went on, "Just the same, and you must understand that I'm not criticizing in the least, I'm not sure that it is *quite* the thing for a young girl to be doing."

"Anyone who's been a widow for five years can do about what she pleases," said Penn. "And this *is* important, Clara. Not what little I do, I don't mean that, but everything that's happening here. Surely you realize that East Tennessee, our own flesh and blood, is about as Yankee as New York. Look at that Oliver Temple, at Parson Brownlow and John Netherland. They're worse than Sumner or Stanton or even that awful Lincoln. I can't imagine what Mr. Davis up in Richmond thinks of us. It just means that we loyal ones have got to work that much harder."

Clara threw up her hands. "It sounds awful the way you tell it,

Penn. Just the same, when I was driving down here to see you — as you wouldn't come to see me — ”

“Couldn't, you mean,” said Penn.

“To be sure. Couldn't. Well, coming down here I passed a lot of Yankees. Oh, don't ask me where they were going or what they were doing or how many they were or if they had guns! All I mean is, a lot of them were right handsome men and the most elegant gentleman, a colonel I think, with a lot of other officers, held up some cannons so I could drive by. His name was Rousseau, one of the Kentucky Rousseaus. I don't know that I've ever seen such a good-looking man and he made me the nicest bow! I was really quite in a flutter.”

Penn patted her hand. “All your other beaux will be furious, Clara.”

Clara bridled delightedly. “*They'd* know I'd never look twice at a Yankee — but my, he was handsome. And speaking of beaux, Penn, what about that gorgeous man on the horse, the one with that lovely black hair and all those stripes?”

Penn's face was impassive. “Oh, you mean Mr. Sheldon? Why, he's with his battery, I suppose.”

Clara giggled. “*You* suppose! Don't try to fool Cousin Clara, Penn. You know perfectly well where he is. Do you think he'll call before I go home?”

Penn shook her head and the brown ringlets shimmered about her smooth face. “I really don't know where he is and maybe he won't call again. I had to speak to him quite sharply the last time he came.”

Clara's voice was hushed and eager. “My dear, you *didn't*! Do tell me about it.”

“Nothing to tell. Oh, he behaved himself, if that's what you mean.”

“Oh,” said Clara, disappointed. “Just the same, I'm sure there's more to it than you told me.” She rose. “Now I'm going back to bed and you'd better, too.”

“Just as soon as I've seen about lamps and windows. Have a good sleep, Clara.”

When her cousin had gone, Penn Grainger slowly turned out the lamp and strolled toward the hall. She felt an odd irritation with Clara for harping on Whipple Sheldon. He was nothing but a conceited boy, almost a braggart, whom she had found useful in collecting information. Nothing more. She carefully put out the hall

light. "Just the same," she thought, "if he ever stopped thinking about himself and what things could be used for himself, he might be a terribly easy person to like. I wonder why he didn't come on Tuesday."

She walked slowly up the stairs, her thoughts somber. Married at sixteen to a son of the next plantation, a man whom she scarcely knew as a bride and scarcely remembered now as a widow of five years' standing. Her father and mother dead in the same sweep of fever that had carried off her husband. Her state which she loved harried by a hostile army. Was there anything in life for her beyond helping that state and the ideals for which, in her mind, it stood? She sighed as she reached the second floor. Whatever her problems, Whipple Sheldon was not the solution.

Breakfast at the Tremont House in Marietta was a dreary affair. Tom and Whipple, joined by Marion Ross and Will Pittenger, crowded into the dining room where a few officers sat at the long table among the civilians. There were watery coffee, soggy corn bread, cold pork, and underdone bacon.

They hurried through the breakfast and adjourned to Ross's room where a tall, clean-shaven man with steady, level eyes was waiting. "Sam Slavens of the 33rd," Ross announced with a wave of his hand. "Where are the others, Sam?"

"Out to the Railroad Hotel for news," said Slavens. "We all ate earlier than you did."

"That's the stuff," said Ross. "We all better hit out and watch."

"Hold it," said Whipple. "We can't scatter like that. We'll take turns watching and those who aren't at the Railroad or at the station better camp right here. Tom and I'll go first. Tom, you take the other hotel and I'll cover the station."

The morning was bright but blowy with a strong wind that sent dark-rimmed clouds skating across the sky. Whipple lounged about the platform watching for a train from the northwest, watching lines of freight cars clank up the track, their roofs thick with gray infantry bound for camps between Marietta and Chattanooga. It seemed to him as the day wore on that the number of aimless loungers increased. He wished that he could reason out Andrews's intentions. He was convinced that the spy would appear in Marietta but it was

hard to visualize events beyond that point. To lure some twenty-odd enlisted men of the Union Army deep into Georgia would be of no conceivable benefit to the Southern cause. No, there was some deep, underlying scheme in which the Ohio men were to be used. He shrugged and lit a cigar. When Andrews did appear, he would be bound to show his hand, if only unconsciously. Then it would simply be a case of reasoning out what personal benefit the man might derive from what was on foot and the answer would soon be clear.

At noon, Ross came to relieve him. Instead of going back to the room, Whipple took Tom's place at the Railroad Hotel and sent the latter on to the Tremont House. If anything was going to happen, he, Whipple, would be right on the spot.

Tom climbed to his room and dozed fitfully through the afternoon. At six he joined forces with Pittenger and sat through a dismal dinner of fatty ham, cold vegetables, and pasty pudding. As they returned upstairs, Pittenger sighed. "I begin to find this waiting tiresome."

Tom opened his door. "Come on in. Tiresome? I've got the shakes so bad that if a dog scratched his ear behind me, the noise'd make me jump so high I could name the apostles forward and backward before I hit the ground. Let's play two-handed poker."

"It's against the rules of my church," said Pittenger, pulling up a chair.

"Sure," said Tom. "I forgot." On the long road down from Shelbyville he had developed a respect as well as a liking for the earnest, stoop-shouldered man with his long, spectacled face and scholar's eyes and brow. "You're really figuring on going into the ministry when we're out of this?"

"If I feel the call," said Pittenger simply. "If not, I'll go on teaching. I don't see, really, that there's much difference between the two callings."

"No, I guess not. Not the way you'd go at either. Tell you what, when we're out of this, I'll see that you meet my father. He's interested in teaching."

Pittenger's eyes glinted behind his lenses. "You'd introduce me to him? That'd be mighty kind." He grinned wryly. "Only we've got to get out of this first."

"Oh Lord," groaned Tom. "I tell you, Will, I don't like this for a

damn and I didn't like it much better at the start. Where do you suppose Andrews is? Ever figure that we'd have a lovely job getting home if he's slipped and bust a leg or got drowned in the Boiling Pot or the Skillet or places like those in the Tennessee?"

"I confess I've considered it," said Pittenger.

"I've chewed on it until my teeth are worn down like an old hound's. Whip says everything's fine." He started to stretch out on the bed, then swung his feet to the floor.

Out in the hall, footsteps sounded. As Tom stood up, the door flew open and Whipple dashed in, his eyes snapping. He cried, "On your feet. He's here. Get over to the Railroad Hotel, Room Seven, second floor!" Then he was gone.

Heart pounding, Tom clattered out of the hotel and out into the street with Pittenger laboring behind him. He caught his breath as he crossed the threshold of Room Seven. The room was crowded and in one corner, arms folded, stood James Andrews. He looked somehow taller and prouder than ever and his intent eyes played over the room. Whipple, closing the door, called, "All here, Mr. Andrews."

Andrews drew himself up and began to speak in a clear, vibrant voice that drew all the men closer to him. "From now on we'll be together, the whole twenty-four of us. We're done with scattering. Draw nearer, please."

Men shuffled forward, stood on chairs, perched on the bed where Tom and Whipple had installed themselves. Andrews's piercing glance sought out each face before him and Tom felt the same chill run down his back that he had known in the woods by the War Trace road. Whipple watched the leader through half-closed eyes.

Andrews went on. "We shall all meet at the seven o'clock train for Chattanooga tomorrow morning. Go there by twos and threes and get tickets for any station you like along the line. When the train comes in, it will have three empty freight cars and two coaches. Get into the first coach. Don't speak to each other except casually but keep the rest in sight. You can't miss the train because you'll know the name of the locomotive—the *General*. Once on board we all ride on to the next stop north, Big Shanty. When we get there, the rest of the passengers and the train crew will get out and make for the station dining room for breakfast. You'll get off,

too, but on the other side, the left side, of the train. There's a big army camp there on that side but the sentries, having no orders about you, won't interfere with what you're going to do. Is that clear so far?"

There was a low murmur of assent.

"All right. Here's what we do. Wilson Brown and Will Knight, our engineers, along with their firemen, will go right up to the engine with me. On the way, Brown, you'll pull the drawbar that couples the last freight car to the first passenger car. That'll cut the train about in two. The rest of you'll pile into the freight cars and close the doors."

"What if someone tries to stop us?" asked Slavens from across the room.

Andrews's jaw snapped. "Shoot him — but only as a last resort."

Whipple, eyes narrowed, asked, "Why pick Big Shanty, if there's a Reb camp there?"

Andrews turned to him. "It's our best spot. The train will be emptied for breakfast. Also, there's no telegraph there. As to the troops — well, you're a soldier. Put yourself in the sentries' places. There's nothing to make you suspicious, deep as this in the Confederacy."

Someone growled, "When we get this train, what do we do? I ain't heard that yet."

Andrews's face glowed. "We — go — north. We've got a straight run with only a slight halt at the Kingston Junction. I've got the timetables and everything. I've got letters, real letters, from Beauregard that'll frank us through about anything. When we reach the bridge over the Oostenaula beyond Resaca, we burn it. We burn the bridge over Chickamauga Creek this side of Ringgold and burn the bridge over the same creek this side of Graysville. They're wood and they'll go up like heaps of gunpowder."

Tom listened intently, all uncertainty gone. In that bearded face he read not only a powerful magnetism but a dedication, a cool, calculating daring and yet a hot, eager daring. The plan ought to work. If it did, the South could not move a single soldier or a pound of supplies by rail nearer than fifty miles of Chattanooga and Mitchel's oncoming blue columns. If it failed — Tom shivered. He and his companions could claim immunity under the laws of war,

but Andrews! A rope and a tree would give the answer to failure. Tom looked around, shocked. Across the room Marion Ross was speaking. "Mr. Andrews, I think we'd better call this off."

"Why, Marion?" asked Andrews courteously.

"Well, seems to me you've based this on nabbing the train the *same* day that Mitchel takes Huntsville. That's today. Chattanooga'll be in a panic with hell-for-certain going on everywhere — on roads and railroads. We'll be rolling right into a stew kettle that's all a-bubble."

Andrews drew himself to his full height and his voice rang out clear. "The more confusion, the better for us. But it's certain that the bad weather that we met coming down must have delayed Mitchel. Whatever's happened, I'm going through with this if I have to go alone. I'll win out — now! Or, by God, I'll leave my bones in the Confederacy."

Whipple jumped to his feet. "We're with you! Come on, boys. No one's backing out. We'll run that damned train through to Vicksburg if Mr. Andrews gives the word."

There was a murmuring assent. Whipple seized Tom's arm, whispering, "Steady now! We stick to him like shadows. He's ready to set something going and we'll be there to spill him hard."

P A R T I I

The Chase

THERE was a sparkle in the early morning air as Whipple and Tom left the Tremont House. Whipple threw back his head. "I'm feeling tiptop. It's like that Fourth of July when I beat that runner—you remember him—the Champeen of Pickaway County."

Tom grumbled. "Glad one of us feels like that. I'm still floaty as hell, like a turtle with his shell off." He watched the steady drift of people heading for the Marietta station.

Whipple laughed. "Get into that crowd and mingle like hell. Remember, a lot of them are ours."

Slowly the passengers hitched past the ticket window. Whipple slapped down his fare. "One to Kingston. Going to see the prettiest girl in Bartow County."

"Better buy a round-trip. You'll need it," said the agent sourly.

"Wouldn't dare. Your road's apt to blow away before I could use it."

Tom bought a ticket to Resaca, the only station he could remember, and stood uncertainly by the tracks. At the end of the platform, Andrews chatted easily with a Confederate officer, his silk hat gleaming in the sun and a neat black bag in his hands. Beyond him Tom saw Pittenger, Ross, Slavens, and the two engineers, Knight and Brown. On a bench Whipple was examining the lock of a musket, tightening a screw with his knife while an undersized infantryman watched him with doglike gratitude. Tom shoved his hands in his pockets, wondering how the others managed to act so naturally. Then the last shreds of confidence left him as the morning train swung around the bend. Through a haze, Tom saw the name, the *General*, on the shiny side of the cab.

The train stopped and a few sleepy passengers clumped down. People began pushing and Tom found himself carried with them

into the first coach where he dropped weakly into a seat near the door.

Whipple swung nimbly aboard just as the wheels began turning and installed himself where he had a good view of the whole car. The far door opened and a man came in calling, "Tickets, please." It seemed to Whipple that the conductor was scrutinizing each passenger with unusual care. He waited composedly as the man worked his way down the car. As Whipple held out his ticket, he nodded pleasantly. "You're Mr. Fuller, aren't you? Mr. William Fuller?"

The conductor looked surprised. "You've traveled with me before, sir?"

"My first run north. But I heard about you in town. They told me you're a good man to travel with. Got a full load, haven't you?"

Fuller pulled thoughtfully at his mustache. "I'd call this about average for these times. Just the same, a run like this keeps me watching."

"Watching?" asked Whipple indifferently.

"The army. They've warned me to keep an eye out."

"So? What do they want?"

The conductor leaned over the seat. "Deserters. A lot of folk don't exactly crave this conscription, and try to hit for the hills. Take that pair three seats up, the little fellow with the glasses and the man with the beard. I've been wondering about them. Don't know just what it is, but they hit me funny."

Whipple shrugged. "Might be. But I heard them talking at the station. They're on their way to enlist — or so they say. Looking for the Pulaski Light Battery or something like that."

"Guess they're all right. Have a cup of coffee with me at the breakfast stop, Mr. — ah —"

"Sheldon, Whipple Sheldon. I'd be glad to take a cup with you. What's the stop? Acworth?"

"No. Big Shanty. I'll look for you there."

Whipple smiled. "Fine. Don't miss me."

Fuller nodded and swayed on to the next car.

Whipple looked out the window. He felt a mounting sense of exhilaration as the scene of coming action approached. Then he saw a station roof, a few sheds and, on the other side of the track,

an expanse of whitish tents where men in gray moved, antlike. He gathered himself, ready to spring to his feet. Fuller thrust his head into the car. "Big Shanty! Big Shanty! Twenty minutes for breakfast!"

Whipple was up in a single movement. He darted out the rear door and dropped to the ground on the side away from the station. Other men were tumbling out of the forward door, Tom among them. Whipple walked along the track, knowing that there would be a jam at the doors of the freight car. He glanced at the camp. At the edge of the tents a sad-faced man leaned on his musket and watched apathetically. The sentry beyond was equally uninterested. There was no danger on that side.

He reached the first freight car where Slavens was scrambling in through the open door. Beyond, Andrews and the engineers and firemen were hurrying toward the locomotive. Whipple stopped by the open door, calling, "In with you, Tom. That's right. Give Will a hand. Come on, Marion. Boost that man ahead of you!"

Tom was in the car, hauling Pittenger up after him. The tormenting fear and uncertainty had vanished with the chance for action. He watched other men wriggle in through the door, then leaned out. "Whip! Come on!"

Whipple waved to him. "Plenty of time." He was watching Andrews and his group climbing into the cab of the *General*. If Andrews was planning something underhanded, this would be one of the logical spots for him to reveal himself. He could see the silk hat bobbing about, while its wearer seemed to be directing the engineers. "Looks all right so far," thought Whipple grudgingly. "I'll have to get where I can keep an eye on him all the time."

He looked toward the camp again. In a tethered buggy sat a strikingly pretty girl whose reddish hair showed provocatively under a smart bonnet. Whipple waved to her. She turned her head away. Then her mouth puckered and deep dimples showed in her cheeks. She lowered her head and then flashed even, white teeth in a smile. Whipple called, "That's better, honey. Wish me luck."

The girl waved a small gloved hand while the nearest sentry sighed enviously.

From the car, Tom cried, "Whip! For God's sake!"

The train began to move, leaving a widening gap between the

freight cars and the coaches. Tom yelled again. Whipple broke into an easy trot, keeping pace with the wheels and looking back over his shoulder at the girl, who still waved.

In the car Tom danced about. "Whip! For God's sake, swing up! Now! Now! Swing for it! Oh, God Almighty!" He tried to jump out but Ross and Slavens, big powerful men, held him back. He struggled. "Whip's out there! He's left behind!"

Ross snapped. "Shut up. You're on a job. Joining Whip won't help!" Tom was forced into the end of the car.

When the stone by the track tripped him, Whipple had a whirling vision of the last car slipping far beyond his reach. He rolled to the foot of the embankment and came up standing in one swift motion. His head spun with the shock of the unexpected fall and odd lights danced before his eyes. Through the welter of confusion, two thoughts shaped themselves. First, that the train was gone. Second, that in some way he would have to overtake it. He looked about. The guards at the camp still watched dully. The girl was clapping her hands and laughing as though he had performed some feat to win her applause. That side of the track was safe. Then it occurred to him that the other side might be still safer and far more useful. He ran past the end of the motionless coaches and on toward the station. Only railroad people would be interested in overtaking the *General* and its cars. He'd use them somehow and then get rid of them.

The door of the restaurant burst open and Fuller plunged out, his eyes blazing. Whipple shouted, "Mr. Fuller. They've captured your train!"

A heavy-set mustached man pounded on in Fuller's wake, bellowing, "Holy hell! Deserters!"

Fuller yelled, "I saw them! Just three of them! In the cab! Deserters sure as hell."

Whipple's heart gave a great leap. The conductor was unaware of the men who had clambered into the cars, was convinced he had only three men to deal with. He caught Fuller's arm. "God damn yellow-bellied deserters! We'll get 'em. Where's the nearest chance for another locomotive?"

Fuller whirled to a stop, panting heavily. "Engine? Hell, we can't wait. We'd have to send by horseback to Marietta and then

telegraph to Atlanta. Come on!" He darted up the track at an amazing speed, the heavy-set man laboring after him.

Whipple stared after him. "Chasing a train on *foot*? It's crazy! H'm. Just the same, Fuller's no fool, I'd say." He set out in pursuit of the two men, calling to Fuller, "They'll get flagged up ahead, won't they?"

"No! They're deserters, I tell you. They'll just run a few miles up the track. Then they'll jump and break for the hills. I'll break their God-damn necks." He called over his shoulder, "Keep going, Murph. We'll get 'em."

"I'm with you, Bill," wheezed the heavy-set Murphy.

Whipple, keeping close by Fuller, rounded a curve with him, saw the last car of the *General*, half a mile away, vanish around a bend in a derisive flirt of smoke. At last the pace began to tell on Fuller. He panted and labored on, but his pace slackened. Suddenly he sat down and pounded the ground with his fists. Whipple stopped beside him. "Hell, man, you're not quitting, are you?"

Fuller scrambled to his feet. "You'll stand by? Then I'm not quitting. We'll go on in relays. We'll crawl if we have to. But we'll get my train. Three of them, three of us! We'll handle 'em!" Murphy lumbered up, mopping his face. "They'll be close to Acworth by now, Bill," he panted.

"You with the line?" asked Whipple.

The other glared. "With the line? I'm Anthony Murphy, Head Superintendent of the W. and A. shops, on an inspection run."

Fuller yelled suddenly, "Murph! I'd clean forgot! The section gang."

Murphy bawled, "Glory be to God. It's not much, but it'll serve."

Fuller dropped down the bank and ran on parallel to the tracks, Whipple and Murphy following. They found Fuller struggling with a small handcar that lay in the grass. The three manhandled it up onto the rails. The conductor snatched up a long wooden bar that lay by the track. "Get that other pole, Murph."

Murphy picked up his staff, wheezing, "Spawn of a thousand devils, but it's a long shot. It's the luck of the Irish that it's down-grade most of the way."

Fuller snapped, "Get going. Mr. Sheldon, sit on the back of the car and kick at the ties. Every ounce we get'll help." He swung his

pole like a boatman, jabbed it into the ground, and heaved. Murphy toiled on the other side while Whipple, his back to the pair, braced his heels against a tie and heaved.

Whipple found that he was beginning to admire Fuller. The conductor was utilizing every possible chance to overtake his train. Whipple would, of course, help in every way he could. If the miracle occurred and the *General* was overhauled, it would be quite a shock to Fuller to find that he had far more than three men to face.

Fuller braked the car suddenly and Whipple looked around. A group of Negroes with a white foreman were sitting on the grass. Murphy shouted, "Muldoon! The *General*."

The foreman shambled to the car. "It went by not ten minutes ago, Mr. Murphy. The gentleman in charge was after showin' me a paper from Ginerol Beauregard himself that said I was to give him me tools. A big man he was with a fine great lot of powder for the army in his cars."

Murphy roared like a wounded beast. "And it's *my* tools you gave him, Shawn Muldoon! Cromwell's curse on you for a bog-trotting loon." He seized his pole. "Come on. We'll get to Acworth and telegraph up the line."

Suddenly Fuller began to swear, luridly and profusely. Just ahead, a telegraph pole was down and wire trailed over the ground in fantastic loops. Another pole down, its insulators smashed and wire gone. A third. Had others in the party shared Whipple's suspicions of Andrews, seized him and prepared to carry out the plan which Andrews outlined in the hotel and in which Whipple had little faith?

They cleared Acworth where there was nothing to be learned save that the *General* had passed through and that a tall, handsome man had called from the cab that the regular train, Bill Fuller's train, would be along shortly. Now they were on a long, straight stretch with a steady downgrade which sent the wheels turning at a speed that Whipple judged to be about twenty miles an hour.

Fuller yelled a sharp warning. Whipple felt the car lurch and was shot through the air with fields and trees whirling about him. He landed heavily below the embankment and lay panting. Then he got to his feet and ran to Fuller, who was glaring at the upturned car. Its front wheels canted crazily and the axles were badly bent.

Murphy limped up to mutter rich, Hibernian curses over the wreck. "We're licked, Bill," he panted. "Mr. Sheldon, look at that."

But Whipple was studying the track. Two rails had been pried up, causing the disaster to the car. He ran his hand through his hair, frowning. This wasn't the haphazard work of a random group of men. Someone had directed this demolition, had planned and ordered the cutting of the wires. *Could* Andrews have been playing a straight game? He swore under his breath.

Fuller snarled, "Mighty smart deserters. By God, Murph, we're not licked. I'm going to get my hands on that train of mine."

Whipple looked north along the tracks. He did not share the conductor's optimism. So far as he could see, he was hopelessly stranded in Georgia. He scowled at the silver-gray band of the Etowah River that glinted under sullen clouds that were massing slowly. The water could be of no use to them. It ran in the wrong direction and — He caught Fuller's arm and shouted, "What's that?"

Fuller and Murphy stared open-mouthed as Whipple pointed to the plume of smoke that rose lazily just beyond the long bridge. The conductor gave a great leap. "The *Yonah*! The Etowah Iron Works engine! Come on."

He ran off across the fields toward the bridge and the smoke. Whipple raced beside him. "What's our chance?"

"Slimmer'n a weasel's tail. *Yonah* runs on a branch line down to the Iron Works five mile away. They got steam up. There's a turntable where the branch joins the main line. Wave something! Yell! If they get away to the Iron Works we're done."

The boards of the bridge rang under Whipple's feet as he shot into the lead. There was the *Yonah* off to the right, its big wheels just starting to turn. Fuller pulled out his derringer and fired into the air. The conductor roared, "Come back! It's me, Bill Fuller." A startled head appeared in the cab window. Fuller dashed past Whipple. "You know me! Fuller! W. and A. That's Mr. Murphy, the Super, right behind."

The wheels stopped turning and the engineer and fireman dropped to the ground, staring blankly. Fuller stormed: "Deserters. They captured my train. Just three of 'em. They've been ripping up track and cutting wires. I want the *Yonah*. I'll catch up before they reach Resaca."

The engineer, a long, stooped man, scratched his nose. "Don't know 'bout that. The *Yonah's* Iron Works prop'ty."

The fireman spat angrily. "Hell, Lafe. Let's go get 'em. I'll fire till the old coffeepot's red hot."

Murphy thumped up, puffing. "I'll take responsibility with the Iron Works. Get into the cab, you two. Go with 'em, Bill. Mr. Sheldon, give me a hand with the turntable. Got to head her right."

Whipple snatched up a crowbar and heaved with Murphy. The turntable swung slowly, slowly. Fuller barked a warning and Whipple withdrew his bar. There was a clack and the turntable locked. Whipple jumped to the cab, Murphy clambering after him. Fuller nodded vigorously. "You've stood to your job like a man, Mr. Sheldon. I'll see your name's in every paper in the South."

Whipple thought grimly, "I wouldn't be a bit surprised." The engineer, hand on the throttle, looked around inquiringly. Murphy waved a thick arm. "Take her out."

"Run easy," warned Whipple. "You may strike torn-up track."

"Got to take a chance," said the engineer tersely. The wheels spun, caught, and the *Yonah* slid onto the main line. Suddenly Fuller shouted a warning and dropped from the cab as the *Yonah* stopped.

Murphy bawled, "What the hell?" as Fuller raced off toward a small cluster of tents not far from the track. Whipple saw him speak quickly to a gray-clad officer who nodded at once and shouted an order. Five infantrymen, haversacks bobbing, ran after Fuller and piled into the wood-stacked tender. Fuller pulled himself into the cab and shouted to the engineer. The *Yonah* gathered itself and rolled on north.

Whipple rested his elbows on the nearest sill and frowned out at the hills that slid by. Somehow, he had visualized a long, stern chase with no one but Fuller, Murphy, and the crew of two. Now, if Fuller had added these infantrymen, he could easily call for more as he passed bigger camps. How did that affect his own plans? Quickly his mind shaped possibilities:

The *Yonah* would catch up with the *General*. In that case, the twenty-three men (counting Andrews) ought to be able to cope with the five obviously raw infantrymen in the tender, together with Fuller and Murphy, even though the twenty-three had only pistols

and revolvers. If more troops were added, then everything was changed. It would be up to him to take some steps that would divert or hamper the superior force. He would have to keep eternally alert, ready to take advantage of any circumstances that might arise.

The *Yonah* could *not* overtake the *General* — always assuming that Andrews, for reasons of his own, would press on. The *General* had a relatively great head start, to which was added the advantage that those who directed it knew exactly what they were going to do, whereas Fuller, still convinced that only three men manned it, had to grope his way along, guessing.

The more Whipple thought, the more he was convinced that the *General* could not be caught. In that case, he must encourage Fuller in his pursuit, get as far north as possible, and then take to the hills where his progress ought to be about as easy as on the trip down. It would be rather humiliating, perhaps, to rejoin the battery with the record of getting himself lost. On the other hand, posted as he was in the cab, he was in a rare position to observe what lay along the line, to note camps and troop movements. Also, trailing on in the rear like this, he might well be able to solve the puzzle of Andrews, to checkmate him thoroughly. His frown deepened. Andrews was all wrong, of course, and yet . . .

It was dark and clammy in the *General's* crowded freight car. Rain which had started not long before began to leak through the roof. Tom stirred uneasily. The wait at the Kingston junction had been supposed to last only twenty minutes, but already much more time than that had elapsed and the train still waited on the siding. He tried to comfort himself with the thought that each second's delay gave Whip just that much more time to catch up. Then he thought, "Catch up — how?" and comfort left him.

He squinted out through a narrow crack in the side of the car.

He could not see the station, just the branch track where the Rome train waited. Civilians and a few soldiers lounged about, yawning and looking at their watches. Then he recognized Andrews's voice, saw him come into sight, calm and unruffled, the very picture of a prosperous planter. With him was a fat, pig-eyed man in an obvious state of irritation. The latter snapped querulously, "Al-

mighty God damn funny I ain't had no word 'bout Fuller. That's *his* engine, *his* cars."

Andrews said gravely, "I must say I'm at a loss to explain the failure of the telegraph to notify you officially. As I told you, these cars have powder for General Beauregard. He needs it badly after that Shiloh action. I assure you, there will be grave consequences to us all if these cars do not have right-of-way over everything. You've seen my credentials."

The official was not satisfied. "Reckon they're all right, but I'm paid to run a railroad, not a war."

Andrews nodded in polite acquiescence. "I understand your position. Of course. But—I think I know that colonel over by the Rome train. Suppose we speak to him."

Tom stared in awe and wonder as Andrews, trailed by the official, strode easily over to the waiting Rome train. He was out of earshot, but Tom saw a tall, handsome man with colonel's braid on his sleeves turn to Andrews with a warm smile. Andrews pointed to the cars and the colonel nodded a few times and then seemed to speak reassuringly to the station official, who finally slouched off reluctantly. Then the colonel and Andrews, joined by a spruce young lieutenant and a civilian, paced slowly up and down, talking earnestly. "How the hell does he do it!" Tom marveled inwardly.

He stiffened suddenly. Andrews was walking rapidly back toward the *General*, laughing and calling over his shoulder to the men with whom he had been talking. Tom nudged Slavens, who lay beside him. Something was going to happen. Then far up the main line he heard a whistle. The down train at last! He crept quietly across the car and joined big Campbell at another crack.

He could see the mainline which formed a great Y with the Rome branch, the fork of the Y being intersected by the siding on which the *General* lay. The down train, an odd mixture of flatcars, freight cars, and coaches, puffed into sight, halted. A tall, round-shouldered man, evidently the conductor, dropped to the ground. Tom whispered to Campbell, "Now we'll go. Straight run to the bridges and then home."

"Maybe," grunted Campbell.

Andrews came into view, walked briskly up to the conductor, and Tom could hear his words clearly. "You're Mr. Watts, aren't you?"

I'd be glad if you'd pull your train down the line a little. Your last cars are across the switch up there and I can't start north until they clear it."

The conductor scratched his head. "Got no orders 'bout you."

Another voice joined in and Tom saw the Confederate colonel again, asking, "Any trouble, Jim?"

"Not for me," Andrews's voice was level. "But I can assure Mr. Watts that there may be for him when General Beauregard hears his powder was blocked."

The colonel nodded vigorously. "It could mean martial law, with the army running your road, Watts," he said crisply.

The conductor stared. "Why ain't you said the stuff was for old Bory? Sure, I'll pull out, only—"

Andrews cut in sharply. "What's that red flag doing on your last car?"

"Means an extra's coming behind me. Leadbetter's shoving a sight of truck south from Chattanooga."

"What for?" The colonel's voice sounded sharp.

"Mitchel. Ain't you heard? Took Huntsville and is hittin' east fast as he can. You can move soon's the extra's past, but how'll you get on beyond Chattanooga with Mitchel hitting this way from Huntsville?"

"I only know my orders. I can't alter them," said Andrews.

"Correct," snapped the colonel. "You've got to keep on as if you hadn't heard."

Watts turned away, signaled to his engineer, and the train moved on down the track. Tom went back to his original position. He could tell from the subdued murmurs about him that most of the others had heard, that they knew as soon as the special cleared the line there would be a straight run to the bridges, quick work with fire, and a dash on through Chattanooga to meet Mitchel's advancing blue waves.

Tom lay on his back and waited, trying to gauge the passage of time. Outside, rain dripped and occasional footsteps crunched past the car. Fifteen minutes? Twenty-five? Half an hour? It was hard to judge.

A whistle ripped the air to the north and Tom got to his knees. The special. He stared through the narrow crack and saw the engine

labor into sight, trailing a long string of cars. It came on with maddening slowness. He muttered through his teeth, "Get the hell off the line. Let us through." Then a numbness fell over him. Like the regular down train, the special trailed a red flag. A red flag! That meant another special, unknown miles away. Then the single track that led on to the bridges and Chattanooga.

On the main line, the special chuffed and wheezed and came to a repose. Inside the car there was no relief from suspension. A metallic clang echoed under the car as though a hammer tapped against the wheels. A low voice sounded by the door. "That is Bill Knight. Don't talk. Listen." The hammer clanged again. "Folks at the station are getting jumpy." (Slam! Crash!) "Have your guns ready. If Andrews or I open this door, come out quick and come out shooting. Break for the west."

Ross's voice whispered, "Where's Andrews?"

"At the telegraph office, making sure nothing's sent out about us. And he's sitting on the switch key so no one can stop him from shoving us onto the main line."

"True about Old Stars at Huntsville?" someone asked.

"Seems to be. Andrews just got word — don't ask me how — that friends of his have cut the wires between Chattanooga and Richmond. No one'll bother us from that end."

Tom asked, "How about Atlanta?"

"I figure they must have heard down there and they've got some train burning the rails after us. Hell roast these specials! We ought to be past the Oostenaula by now." His footsteps died away.

It began to grow lighter outside, but the rain fell harder. Tom pulled out his watch and held it to the crack where he could just make out the dial. They had been waiting fifty minutes.

Another whistle from the north. The roar of the oncoming special filled the world. He tried to reach the farther crack, but someone else was there before him. Suppose this special, too, carried a red flag! There was an interminable pause. The car gave a lurch, its wheels clacked slowly, gained speed as the whistle of the *General* cut clear through the rain.

Tom shouted. Kingston, the one real danger spot on the run, was slipping behind. The intoxication of rising speed filled the car. Men shouted, roared out scraps of song, kicked the sides of the car. Then

the brakes of the tender screeched and the train stopped. From the outside, hands tore open the doors. Tom, first to jump, saw Andrews standing by the track, calling, "Get those wires down. Rip up what rail you can. Hurry, now!"

Someone jammed a crowbar into Tom's hands and he wedged it under the rail behind the last car. As he strained at the task, he saw that men were swarming up the telegraph poles, smashing insulators and cutting wire. He threw his weight against the rail while Ross, just behind him, swung a sledge against the bolts. Andrews added his strength to Tom's on the crowbar, panting, "Hurry, boys! Scott, be sure those wires are slashed plenty. We don't want them telegraphing ahead from Kingston. There are two down trains waiting on the Adairsville siding. God knows what they'll do with this delay. Heave, now, heave!"

There was a sharp twang and the rail burst under the strain from the crowbar. Andrews shouted, "Enough! One rail's as good as ten. Back into the cars with you. Only ten miles to Adairsville!"

Tom and the others leaped into the last car, cursing and rubbing their knees as they stumbled over piles of oak sleepers that another detail had heaved in during the halt. The train rocked away again, gaining speed. Tom caught the vague glint of Will Pittenger's spectacles and shouted to him. "Must be hitting close to forty. Wow! Feel how she rocks!"

Pittenger slid the door open a crack but there was little to see outside beyond the rush of trees and rain-blurred fields. Then houses showed close by the track and Pittenger slammed the door, crying, "Adairsville! And the down trains are on the siding! I saw them. We're clear for a straight run!"

Tom joined in the general shout, but his throat contracted suddenly as momentum died and died, leaving the train at a standstill. He pressed an ear to the side of the car and heard Andrews talking to someone, probably one of the south-bound conductors, who was saying, "It's only me, mister. Freight. The south-bound local's half an hour late. I'm waiting on the siding for it to pass me. Where's Bill Fuller?"

"Some forty minutes behind me," said Andrews. "My cars have right-of-way over everything."

"All right," said the conductor. "Pull up the line and then back

down the siding. I'll hit right off to Kingston. You tell Bert Ames on the local to overhaul me there."

"That's impossible," said Andrews. "This powder's got to go through."

Tom drew in his breath. Andrews seemed to have forgotten about Mitchel's move east, which the conductor, fresh from Chattanooga, must have known. But excitement had blotted it from his mind. The conductor snapped, "All right. Get it through. Only you'll have to run slow and put a flagman out ahead of you on curves. God knows where the passenger is and you wouldn't want to meet her head on."

The voices stopped and the train gained a speed that set the car swaying. The whistle began screeching and raving. Tom, clinging to a ring in the door, braced himself, felt men bump against him. He slid the door open a little and looked out. Then he flinched away. Far up the track he saw houses, a station, and, its stack spouting smoke and flame, an engine, with a long string of passenger cars, heading straight toward the *General*. Instinctively he slammed the door and shielded his face.

He rallied and slid the door open again. In that second, the whole scene had changed. Between the two trains a man raced out to a switch, heaved at a lever, and then stood back, wiping his forehead. The *General's* brakes jarred the cars to a halt. Tom peered cautiously through the gap. The down train, a very long one, had halted, its two rear coaches blocking the junction of the main line and the siding, thus effectively tying the *General* on the spur track. Andrews was again arguing with the train crew, apparently urging them to pull ahead and let him run on north. The men of the crew folded their arms and shrugged, seemingly unmoved.

Tom began to sweat with anxiety. The whole plan had depended on a straight run from Big Shanty with only a brief wait at Kingston. Now there had been nearly an hour wasted at that junction, plus delays at Adairsville and, now, Calhoun. Will Pittenger touched his shoulder. "It's all right, Tom. Maybe Whip will have time to catch up."

He turned to answer, but relief sudden / shot the breath from his lungs. The down train moved slowly out of the station and the

General rolled onto the main line. Tom whacked Pittenger across the shoulders. "Clear! Nothing can stop us now."

The wheels drummed louder and louder. Tom caught up an oak sleeper and battered it against the forward end of the car, yelling, "Smash through, boys. Slam it! We're not powder kegs any more."

The boards splintered and gave way. A gust of rain swept in as the wall of the car ahead caved outward and a face appeared. Pittenger shouted, "Hi! Perry! Perry Shadrack! How's things up there?"

Shadrack scrambled into the car. "High and handsome at last. Look, Andrews says have your matches and tinder ready. And punch out the rear end of your car. We've holed through right to the tender. Don't matter who sees us now."

The rear end gave easily and Tom stood between Ross and Pittenger looking back along a fairly straight length of track. Far off, the roofs of Calhoun shone in the rain and to the right a broad river looped its course among low hills. Tom felt a surge of anticipation. Ross turned and called to a man who was watching from the door. "Wood! Mark Wood! What d'you see?"

"Bloody bridge, not a mile off. Can see goods vans on the other bank," answered Wood.

Ross winked at Tom. "Hear that? 'Goods vans.' He's a Johnny Bull, out the 21st. He's—hey! Here's Andrews."

Tom swung about and saw Andrews climbing through the forward gap. Men gathered about him, giving to the sway of the car. He called over the din. "We'll stop just short of the bridge. Jump quick. Wires down and at least one rail up. Then get ready for the burning." His eyes shone. "Boys, we're going to win through. Ready to jump when we slow down." He climbed back through the gap.

The train checked, halted. Men dropped from the doors, from the broken ends. Scott and Slavens flew up the nearest poles. Tom and Ross seized their crude tools and heaved at a length of track while sledges and even heavy rocks slammed at the rail joints. Tom stopped to catch his breath.

The bar dropped from his hands. There had never been a sound like it in the world, never such clamorous vibration. Men stiffened

and stared south down the twisting line in the direction of the new voice, the voice of a locomotive whistle that grew louder and louder. Over a sullen, tree-clad hill, puffs of smoke billowed.

Tom automatically looked toward Andrews. The man's head was back and he stared like the others. Then he motioned in an easy gesture. "All aboard, boys," he said in an even voice.

The pursuing locomotive was running in reverse, its tender first. In the tender Whipple crouched beside Fuller and Murphy. Behind the trio half a dozen armed civilians cursed the drive of the storm and tried to keep their weapons dry. Whipple wiped rain from his face. There had been the jam at Kingston, where two down trains blocked the line and the Rome train waited on the branch. Fuller had burst into the station demanding that the Rome locomotive, the *New York*, under steam and headed north, be cut loose and turned over to him. He had cut through protests and regulations, finally pressing north in the *New York* with a civilian posse clinging on as best they might, leaving the infantry detail to catch up on a later train.

Then there had been the broken rail that Whipple had seen just in time to avoid disaster. Murphy had given up hope and Whipple had braced himself for a dash into the woods. But Fuller had stormed that they would go on afoot, they'd swim, they'd find horses, but, by the Eternal, never would they stop. Then the whistle of the south-bound freight from Adairsville had sent him running along the track with a red flag. When Whipple and the stocky Murphy had caught up with him, he was shouting at the crew, "To hell with orders. You've let the *General* through and I'm going after it with your engine. Murph, get the boys over into this tender. Come on, Sheldon." Then the new engine, the *Texas*, had backed north to drop its cars at Adairsville and had plunged on.

Whipple glanced at Fuller's keen, tense face, shiny with the splash of the rain, and felt a pang of regret. What a job he was doing! From the very start, of course, he had had luck with him — the hand-car, the *Yonah*, the *New York*, and now the *Texas* — but every bit of luck had been pressed to the utmost. Duty to the South, to the railroad, had blotted out every other thought in the conductor's mind. Whipple hoped that, if it came to a clash with the raiders,

Fuller and Murphy could be handled gently. But they must be handled.

He began to figure his own role more closely. Somewhere in the rear, Fuller had told him, two trainloads of regulars and militia were following. Should he, himself, if the *General* was finally caught, try to disable the *Texas* by swinging a sledge against the throttle or the steam gauge? It might be that such a move would be effective, but he couldn't be sure. Or, better, perhaps he could take advantage of Fuller's belief that the *General* held only three or four men, and race to join it if both engines were halted. He and Ross, at the head of some twenty trained soldiers armed with revolvers, could scatter the little posse long before the troop trains could catch up. Then the engineers, Brown and Wilson, would know how to disable the *Texas* beyond hope of quick repair, thus forming an effective track block against further pursuit. It seemed increasingly likely that the *General* could be caught. Something must have gone very wrong with Andrews's plans or else he would by now be miles beyond any danger. Or perhaps this was what Andrews, for reasons now obscure, had intended all along. In that case he could be dealt with at leisure.

The *Texas* shot around a curve and Whipple clung doggedly to the tender. Streams of water ran down his neck; coat and trousers were sopping. Suddenly he saw the peaked roof of a covered bridge, a long trestle, and smoke beyond the trestle. Fuller flung out his dripping arms with a great shout, "There they are!" He turned toward the cab. "Pile it on, boys. Crowd 'em, crowd 'em!"

Whipple got ready for a quick jump and a wild sprint to the *General* if both engines stopped. But the column of smoke was moving away, clearing the station at Resaca on the far bank. Not yet. But the time would come. This time, next time or — He caught Fuller by the shoulder. "Slow down! Look!"

Fuller glared ahead through the slant of the rain. The tracks on the near side of the bridge were littered with loose ties, dumped as temporary obstructions. In the bridge shed the end of a gutted car showed motionless. Fuller flung out his hand and the *Texas* eased to a stop. Whipple shouted, "Out, all hands!" and dropped to the ground, heaving at a tie. Fuller was beside him in an instant. The conductor grunted, "You stood to this job fine."

"Want to catch up as bad as you do," said Whipple dryly. Even if the *General* was not caught, each turn of the *Texas's* wheels took him closer and closer to territory where his chances of a safe getaway were excellent. And each second brought darkness closer. He threw aside the last tie and climbed into the tender. The *Texas* crept ahead until the tender bumped against the derelict car. Then it nosed it along the tracks and dropped it on a short siding at Resaca station.

The chase went on through the downpour. Slowly the *Texas* gained. Whipple saw smoke behind a hill, then saw the *General* and its two cars running clear on a straight stretch, lost it as the line curved again. There were more loose ties near the rails, evidently pitched from the rear of Andrews's train, but all had bounced clear. At Green's wood yard the *Texas* slowed while Fuller shouted a question at the yard crew. Then he signaled full speed once more. Fuller shouted to Whipple: "Hear that? They stopped for wood but they lost time. And they'll have to water-up beyond Tilton."

"Think we'll catch 'em there?"

"Good chance. They must be getting low." He waved to his crew. "Crowd 'em, boys! Crowd 'em!"

Whipple watched the wet miles slip past. Then he saw the scattered houses of Tilton, the station, and the watertank. By the tank stood the *General*, a long hose reaching down to its tender. Men moved about the last car, digging at the rails or heaving ties out. Whipple crouched. Another hundred yards and he could make his leap.

The hose swung clear and the *General* pulled away, picking up speed. Whipple swore as the *Texas* delayed to clear ties from the track. "Never mind," said Fuller grimly. "We'll get 'em. God damn, but they've got a good engineer there. What I can't figure is, why the hell they don't hit for the hills. Maybe the folks at Kingston were right and they ain't deserters after all."

Whipple stared ahead. Andrews had failed to burn the Oostenaula bridge. Now, if he were to burn at all, he would not fail at the Chickamauga spans, and at either of them Whipple would find a chance to break for the *General*.

The *General* was lost to sight in a maze of curves, but they had word of it at the Dalton station where it had been given clearance

for a run through to Corinth. Fuller snapped to Whipple, "Clearing one engine and some smashed cars! If that telegram I sent from Calhoun got through, our people'll be closing in from Chattanooga down."

Whipple stared. "Telegram?"

"Sure. Gave it to that kid at the station. There's just a chance it got through before those bastards cut the wires the last time."

But Whipple was no longer listening. Far up the line was the *General* with one lone car. The other had been dropped somewhere, probably at Dalton. Men were swarming up poles, wrenching at rails. The gap was closing fast and Whipple was sure that he recognized Tom, Ross, and Andrews in the groups. Then there was more smoke, a great scrambling of men, and the quarry was gone, racing around a wide curve and out of sight.

Murphy yelled, "Bill! The tunnel! Tell the boys to slow for it."

"No! Damn the tunnel. Tell 'em to crowd it on. We're gaining."

"Look at that smoke in the tunnel," roared Murphy. "You can't see if those crazy bastards have left a car or the *General* itself half-way in waiting for us."

Fuller waved him back. "We've got to take the chance."

Whipple ducked his head as the *Texas* picked up speed. The tunnel mouth was heavy with smoke. If Andrews had dropped a car there — He set his teeth. The *Texas* rocked on through a darkness that roared and echoed. Then there was light ahead. The track was empty.

Whipple drew a shaky breath as the *Texas* raced in the open along a valley floor, then climbed to a curve that clung to the side of a ridge. Water shone vaguely far ahead, a river spanned by a covered bridge. The bridge was four miles ahead — three miles — Whipple gave a sudden shout. The *General* was pulling out of the far side of the bridge. The last car was nowhere to be seen. Fuller shook his fists in the air. "Late! Too late! He's done it! The God-damn bridge is burning."

Whipple stared. Wisps of smoke curled and eddied from the bridge's mouth and loose ties littered the track. Fuller made a wild gesture and the *Texas* stopped. Fuller swung over the side calling, "Come on. Let's take a look at that bridge. You others, bring her on slow and easy."

Whipple caught up with the conductor, jumping loose ties and stones. In the gloom of the bridge flames wavered and danced, licked about the shattered body of Andrews's last car. Fuller yelled in triumph, "She's still on the rails. We'll butt her ahead to Ringgold. She's not burning much and the bridge is too wet to catch."

As Whipple turned to catch the tender of the *Texas*, a hoarse whistle sounded from the rear. A heavy locomotive idled around a bend and behind it trundled a string of cars, their roofs thick with troops. Fuller's reinforcements had caught up at last. Whipple swung onto the tender. There was a slight jolt and smoky heat flooded over him. The tender caught the burning car and pushed it slowly through the bridge. Fuller crowed to Whipple, "We'll drop her at Ringgold siding and then go through all a-helling."

The car, now merely smoldering, was dropped and the *Texas* struck out at a good speed, rolling along a valley with the thousand-foot mass of White Oak Mountain on the right. Fuller suddenly threw up his hand and the *Texas* slowed down. Whipple asked, "What's that for?"

"Coming to a cutting. Not very deep but it'd be a good place for any hell-raising. Damned if I'm so sure now that those bastards are deserters, and by God if there aren't two dozen of 'em, instead of three, I'm a tallow pot. Here we are."

The engine poked its nose into a shallow, steep-sided trench gouged out of red clay. Whipple gave a sudden shout as Fuller signaled for a stop.

A great boulder rested on the left rail, one face bulging over the roadbed. Whipple leaned out of the tender, eyes on the footprints in the soft clay. Whoever had rolled that rock into the cutting had heaved at it not many minutes ago, for water oozed in the nearest heel marks.

Fuller shouted, "Everyone onto that damn rock. Get it clear."

Whipple looked quickly about and then dropped to the ground on the other side, scrambled up the bank, and broke for the woods that bordered the line. He heard angry shouts behind him. Far to the front, as he turned back, he saw the twisting sweep of the Chickamauga spanned by a bridge.

He plunged into the woods, found a path that seemed to head straight for river and bridge. Soon he was in a region of low hills

cut through with ravines. The track was hidden from him but he kept on, sure of the trend of the old path. Twice it seemed to swing away from the proper bearing and he bore right through the trees only to meet the worn trail again. The ground began to rise and he left the path, digging his heels into the clayey soil.

He stopped short. A shot from the direction of the line! Could the raiders have faced about and fired on the *Texas*, ignorant of the oncoming troop trains? No. There was no mistaking the sound. A musket or rifle shot only. No revolver. Then what? He heaved himself to the top of the bank, ran on through the trees. More shots echoed raggedly. He reached the edge of the woods and stopped as though he had run into a hidden wire.

In the ravinelike hollow ahead of him was the *General*. Its tender was empty and only a faint ooze of smoke came from the stack. To the right the tender of the *Texas* appeared, Fuller standing in it alone and waving to the engine. Up the far slope men with muskets shouted and whooped like hunters. Uniformed men ran on past the *Texas* and fanned out raggedly. Of the Andrews party there was no sign.

He would have to get out of this area and get out quick. But how? He considered slipping down and losing himself among the posse and the troops but quickly rejected it. He would sooner or later be questioned and the only answers he could make were those that Andrews had told him. Now that the alarm had been given he would be linked, eventually, with the crew of the *General*, all of whom, save Andrews, had been telling identical stories along the line. So far, he was alone and unsuspected. His best move would be to strike north and west, aiming for Union lines and trying to overtake the fugitives.

He ducked back among the trees as shouts sounded by the tracks. Four men, unrecognizable at this distance, were climbing a fence into a wheat field that sloped toward the woods. The hat of the leader blew off and Whipple saw Fuller's bald head. Whipple began to run, aware of increasing fatigue that was aggravated by the fact that he had eaten nothing since a very early breakfast at Marietta. He gave a short laugh and checked his pace. Fuller would be equally spent if not more so, since he had not even had his breakfast at Big Shanty. He looked back through the trees. Fuller had obviously

given up and was talking to an officer in gray. The latter signaled and a platoon of infantry began scaling the slope toward Whipple's shelter. Conscripts or very raw recruits, he decided, as he watched them straggle along. They wouldn't move far from the track nor would Fuller stir much beyond his recovered *General*. For the moment, they constituted no threat to him so long as he kept moving away. He set out west at an easy, swinging pace. Sooner or later, he knew, he would strike the west arm of Chickamauga Creek and could follow it up to the main stream or put it behind him as a barrier to pursuit.

It began to grow dark and the rain stopped abruptly. Off to the left, as the woods thinned again, lights burned with a soft, heartening glow. He eyed the lights and then pushed on with a shrug. Food, warmth, and shelter were points that he would have to solve but that lonely farm was too close to the scene of the chase for safety. He crossed a swift brook and found himself in hilly ground beyond it where dogwood buds showed a misty pink in the gloom. His legs began to ache and the slop-slop of his sodden clothes sent little chills running through him. At the top of the slope he found a fine bed of moss under a sheltering rock and pondered the wisdom of sleeping there for a few hours. Then in the direction from which he had come he caught the echo of more shots and was sure that he could hear angry voices. He left the rock and moss.

Later, in heavy darkness where a cold wind cut, he heard the roar of West Chickamauga Creek. Cautiously he crept ahead, feeling for the brink with each step. Then he saw the white of swift water far below, caught the beat of waves. He studied the deep chasm. By moving carefully he could bear north by keeping the silver blur of the creek at his left. How would Fuller, the brains of any pursuit, reason? Obviously, that the fugitives would be brought up short somewhere along West Chickamauga; they would follow it north, just as Whipple was considering. Fuller, by now, would have ample men and transport.

But what would Fuller do in his, Whipple's, place? The answer was easy. He would take the calculated risk. Whipple sat down on the bank, took off his shoes, stuffed his wet socks into them, and slung them about his neck. The calculated risk lay in facing the peril of the white water for the sake of greater safety beyond.

The descent was almost sheer but the sides were soft enough to give him some foothold. It was dizzying to look down over his shoulder. The white surface of the water threw into relief every root, branch, and rock that jutted out. Once a root ripped loose in his hand. Once a rock gave way. But each time luck in the form of another rock, a bulge in the side, saved him until he stood, torn and panting, on the stream's edge. Then he moved downstream, looking for black water.

When he found a patch that showed no foam he took his derringer from his holster and the neat leather cartridge case from his pocket. He caught the case in his teeth, held the pistol high over his head, and, making sure that his shoes were still about his neck, lunged sideways into the water. The current caught him, whirled him away in an icy grip. He swam with one hand, straining to keep his powder and pistol above water. His knee smashed against a rock as he was carried onto a shoal. Then he was in the current again, lashing and kicking. Sand and stones jarred his soles and he floundered to his feet. A few yards away a bank rose high and steep and he saw that he was standing on a small, curving beach above high water.

He sat down stiffly, his lungs heaving. Could he sleep on that beach, so well sheltered? He was up at once. Eerie and menacing, the hollow baying of hounds filled the woods across the creek. He groaned as he scuffed into drenched socks and shoes, tried to wring water from his coat and trousers. Then he turned to the cliff behind him.

The west bank was even worse than the east, but the baying of the hounds sent him up slopes at which he hardly dared to look. It was a shock to reach the crest and find level ground under his feet. Knees and elbows stiff with rank mud, he leaned panting against a great pine. Over the beat of his heart he listened to the weird throbbing voices of the hounds. He gathered himself and set off down the dark funnel of an old deer run.

He stopped with a jerk and edged into the tangled wall of the run. He was sure that there was movement in the night not far ahead. It might be a deer, a raccoon, a possum. Whatever it was, it moved carefully with only an occasional snap or crackle. He crept on, catlike. He could just make out a dark shape beyond a shattered

tulip tree. His ears caught a faint sound. There could be no mistaking it. It was a muffled, human cough. He increased his stride. If the shape ahead were one of the Andrews party he didn't want to startle it into flight through the night woods. Then the thought struck him that he might have come onto a member of a posse, for the baying of the hounds suggested strongly that Fuller's telegram had gone through to Chattanooga.

He slipped out his derringer and broke into full stride. The half-seen figure shot off, still keeping to the old run. Whipple risked the presence of other strangers and called, "Tom! Hi! Tom!"

The figure, now fairly clear, strained away at a faster pace. Whipple swore. The runner was never Tom Madden. Tom never threw his knees high nor did he waste strength pawing the air with each step. He was twenty yards in the rear, then ten. He could make out a slim, narrow-shouldered man with a great felt hat jammed over his ears. Once he saw a lightish blur as a face turned momentarily toward him. The runner wheeled suddenly, raised a thick-barreled revolver. Then runner and weapon vanished in a crash of branches. Whipple cleared the intervening space in a bound. The quarry had tripped and was fumbling for something on the ground.

Whipple caught the fugitive by the shoulder and clamped his foot hard on the revolver that glinted dully on the path. His captive struggled wildly, lashed out with blows that were surprisingly weak. Whipple snapped, "Keep away from that gun or I'll have to hurt you."

High over the trees a bright moon sailed out, laced the woods with hard white and silver and black. The other gave a wrench, kicked out with purposeless feet. Whipple gave a twist that bent his opponent double, then gasped, "Good God!" The last wrench had jarred loose the great hat from his captive's head and a cascade of hair, inky in the moonlight, fell about sloping shoulders, swayed past the slim waist.

He slackened his grip, staring down into the girl's face as she straightened up. Deep-set eyes blazed at him. Her full lips were set in a defiant line that was belied by the quivering of her chin, of her round cheeks. He rallied from his surprise. It was unthinkable that a girl in man's clothing should be part of a posse, yet he dared

take no chances. So many of the Southern women were more fiercely partisan than the men. He said in a low tone, "Talk — and talk fast. What are you doing here?"

She gave a futile wrench and her voice broke. "Let me go. You can't make me go back. You can't."

"Answer me!"

Her hands tore at the wrists that held her and she trembled violently. "I won't say anything — anything!" Her eyes, bright in the moonlight, darted about. She gave a sudden start, as though momentarily unaware of his grip, as a branch snapped in the woods. He felt all at once that she was not so much afraid of him as of what might come out of the night. Far away the sinister chant of the hounds soared up. She gave a low cry. For an instant, she was completely unaware of him, with ears only for the hounds and eyes only for the night. It might have been instinct, it might have been impulse, but he was suddenly sure of her. She was not an enemy. He said in a gentler voice, "Take it easy, now." She strained away from him. He said again, "Take it easy. I'm a Union soldier. We're going the same way."

She panted. "That's what the man at Dalton jail said. He said he was a Union major. I didn't believe him, either."

He shook her gently. "Listen. I'm Whipple Sheldon, first sergeant in Kinnyard's Battery, Sill's Brigade, Mitchel's Division. Does that satisfy you?"

"Let me go. I don't know anything about the Union Army." She struggled again.

"Then listen to this. About twenty of us, in plain clothes, came down to Marietta. We captured a train there. We were going to wreck bridges in the north toward Chattanooga. It didn't work. They're after us. We took to the hills. That's what the shots and the hounds are about."

Her knees sagged and she sank to a stone under a tree. Her shoulders worked as though she were sobbing. Her voice came muffled, "But that man at Dalton —"

"Never mind about him. Tell me what you're doing here. We can work better together if I know more about you."

She shivered and then began to speak in quick, broken sentences. Her head rested on her arms. "It was a week ago. Maybe more. I

don't know. They came to our plantation. It was near Grindstone Mountain on the Big Wolftever. They — ”

“Hold on. Who's ‘they’?”

“Neighbors, mostly. We were Union. They weren't. They burned our house and drove off all the freemen who worked for us. Then — then they killed all our stock. They shot two of the house servants.” Her voice faded to a whisper. “They shot my father.” The whisper died away.

Whipple sat beside her, turning his drenched hat in his hands. “Go on — if it helps.”

“That's all,” she said. “Isn't it enough?”

Whipple shuddered as he recalled the burned-out houses he had seen crossing Tennessee, recalled Marion Ross's stories of the refugees pouring into the Union lines in Kentucky. The girl was on her feet, weaving slightly as she stood. He said, “Believe me, I'm sorry.”

“I can't talk any more about it. I can't think any more about it. I don't know why I told you. The man at Dalton said he was Union, just as you did.”

“Then tell me about yourself,” said Whipple, standing beside her. “I mean, how you came here, where you're going, what you hope to do?”

“I don't know any more. Let me go.” Her voice had an oddly flat tone.

“You'll break down alone. Tell me where you want to go. I'll see you there.”

“All right.” The girl leaned wearily against a tree. “It doesn't matter much. They took me to jail in Dalton. I was handcuffed. They kept questioning me.”

“For instance?”

“We got news out. It wasn't easy, but we did. Sometimes it went direct, sometimes through people in Knoxville or Nashville. I watched the railroads and wrote down what kinds of troops were moving, what kinds of supplies. Then we helped escaped Union prisoners to get back. We helped people who wanted to leave their homes and go where the old flag was.”

“How could you tell about kinds of troops?”

“I listened. I read the papers. I could see. If the trains were mostly horsecars, that meant cavalry. Things like that. That's what

they wanted me to admit at Dalton. I wouldn't. Now I've told you. Do what you like about it. I can't get away."

Whipple was aware of admiration for her courage and of a sudden guilty feeling. He himself had talked unreservedly to a known Rebel girl, Penn Grainger, supposing that she couldn't understand such matters and hoping that his knowledge would impress her. What if she had sent on what he had told her to Leadbetter or Kirby Smith?

The girl caught suddenly at his arm. The hounds were baying again. He shook his head at her. "I've been listening. They're getting fainter and fainter, or we wouldn't have been stopping here. I still don't know how you got here."

"I can't tell you that. Just that people helped me to get away. I had to go in these clothes. I want to get to the Union lines. I'm all right as long as I keep headed this way." Far to the east a man shouted, very faint but audible. Distant hounds picked up his call. The girl said, "You better get along. I'll be all right."

"We'll go on together. Anyway, I need your gun."

"It's empty and broken."

He caught her shoulders and turned her along the trail. "Don't argue. You won't get another five miles by yourself. I'll see you right to the Union lines and make sure you're looked after."

She dropped her head and went silently along. Whipple followed her, part of his mind intent on the vague noises in the east, the rest of it on his new companion. Unquestionably she added complications to his task, could well slow him down dangerously. On the other hand, she was probably straight Union and hence entitled to help. Even if that part of her story were false and she was out-and-out Rebel, he still couldn't leave her to the terror of the woods.

She trotted on and he blessed the people who had given her trousers. Wide skirts would have been fatal on the road which lay ahead. There were other feminine complications, too, that—he gave a sudden bound forward. The baying of a single hound, no longer muted, swept up the run. Behind, the trail showed empty but Whipple was sure that the dog was less than a mile away. Ahead of him the girl had stopped and he called impatiently to her. She was fumbling in the pockets of her coat and did not move. He called again.

"It's too late to run," she answered. "I've been around dogs

enough to know that." Her arm moved and something fell hissing to the ground. Then with a swift motion she glided past him, worked back along the run, her arm still swinging. She came back, dusting her hands. "Get in among the trees—as far as we can." She pushed him gently. "You first."

He moved slowly into the undergrowth, puzzled and yet somehow convinced that she knew what she was doing. He heard a splash of water, saw the loom of a low cliff, a black hollow under it. The hollow sharpened to a cave as he came nearer, a gap barely three feet high. He slithered into it and found that it went far back beyond the reach of his feet. He scrambled out, nearly collided with the girl, who, still bent over, looked carefully about.

He whispered, "Cave. Get right in. It'll just hold us. I'll prop this branch across the mouth to hide it."

She shook her head. "You first. I'll fix the branch." Something of the dead flatness had gone out of her voice, as though her absorption in the present problem had temporarily lessened the shock from which she seemed to suffer. "Please—don't argue. Get in."

He slid in, feet first. "Damn her modesty or whatever it is," he thought as he peered out. She was still scattering something on the ground. Then she dropped to her knees. "All right?" she whispered.

She came in with a lithe movement of her hips. One hand reached out and drew the branch across the mouth. A vague pattern of moonlight sifted through, falling on her high cheekbones and small, high-bridged nose. The walls of the cave pressed her against Whipple. He could feel the rounding of a shoulder, the fullness of a breast, the long line of thigh and leg. She shivered, tried to draw away. He set his teeth. If they were to survive, each would have to think of the other merely as a fellow refugee. He muttered to her, "Here they come. Get comfortable as you can. Lie absolutely still."

The first voice was so close that it startled him. On the run a man said hoarsely, "Keep holt on Blazer's muzzle. He been talkin' too God damn much."

Another man answered, "Best tracker in Catoosa County. Hell, they ain't more'n two-three on 'em. Keep a-diggin' and Blazer'll run 'em down."

Whipple flattened still more. The girl seemed to be resting her forehead on the sandy floor. He could feel her breath on his cheek,

very near. Out on the run a man, sharp in the moonlight, led a big dog. A second man, carrying two guns, came next. Then two more men, a third, all with muskets. The leader kept trying to force the dog's muzzle to the ground but it jerked its head and kept on at a slouching gait. A man said, "Hell! The purp's lost the scent, I tell you."

The leader snapped, "They was on this trace. They ain't broke off it an' they ain't fly'd off it. That means they're on it." The group passed out of sight and earshot. The girl started to wriggle out. Whipple pulled her down quickly. "Those people are smart. Ten to one they'll make a cast back this way." She obeyed reluctantly. He went on, "What were you doing out on the trail, spreading some stuff?"

"It was pepper. It kills any scent. The last people who sheltered me gave me some. I've got a little left."

"Save it. We may not be able to get any more. How do you feel?"

There was a pause. Then she said, "All right, I guess. I wish — I wish there was more room."

"So do I, but I can't push these walls out. You've got to remember this — if we're going to get through, we've got to move and hide when we can and how we can. There isn't any choice."

"It doesn't matter." Her voice was flat and dead again. He felt her whole body contract. "They're coming back."

The men were closer this time. Two of them, without the dog, worked on through the brush on the cave side of the run, grumbling and quarreling. Then they passed out of sight.

Whipple whispered, "No luck. They may range around here for hours. They're bothered about the hound losing the scent. Stretch out as much as you can and try to rest."

She drew deeper into the cave but it narrowed toward the rear and crowded her closer against him. She gave up the effort and lay quietly on her face, her head near his shoulder. He rested his forehead on his arms and tried to plan the next steps.

He had fallen asleep and now a misty half-light, showing through the branches, waked him. He stirred, aching in every muscle. Something tickled his cheek and he brushed at it, touched a thick lock of hair. That brought him from sleep to the present. He looked at the girl. She was sleeping deeply, her head against his shoulder and

one hand under her cheek. Her body was completely relaxed against his, childlike and helpless.

Had she been a man he could have roused her and started out. As it was, she ought to have slept out. In the morning they would push on. Time was precious, he thought. The country where Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama came together was not thickly settled and there was at least a fair chance that posses roused by Fuller would not go far beyond the railroad line. He would have to take a chance on casual country people not having heard of the raiders. Whenever possible, they would avoid main roads and trails.

There was the problem of food. He had found out in the army that there is much nourishment in water. He would have to see that the girl drank as much as she could. The girl! He wondered what her name was. It hadn't seemed important during the night. It didn't now. He dozed.

Slanting sun, full in his eyes, woke him. He rolled on his back and brought up against the other side of the cave. Consciousness returned at once. Where was she?

He looked out and stifled an exclamation. She knelt a few feet away, combing her hair. After each stroke she hitched her chin and threw her head back in a graceful gesture. Her hair was very dark brown and the sun brought out soft glints. Her forehead was smooth and broad, her eyebrows finely arched. Her lashes, darker than her hair, were long and outcurving. Dimly he had seen her profile in the moonlight, the small, high-bridged nose, the pronounced cheekbones, the full lips and firm chin. Daylight did them full justice. She combed on, her graceful neck swaying. He thought, "And I slept beside *that*—all night. Hell with it. On this job she can look like a fish." He left the cave, cramplike pains shooting through him.

There was a dazed, stunned look in her eyes that partly cleared as she saw him. She said in a low voice, "It seems safe to be out. I listened a long time before I tried it. There's a brook down there and I left a piece of soap for you on that stump. What do we do now?"

"Sit closer to the cave," he said. "I'll police up and then see if we can find a mess sergeant."

When he came back from the brook she had twisted her hair into a

knot and covered it with her hat. "About food," she said. "It's too early for berries. We'll have to find a house and then I'll ask for something to eat."

"You?" said Whipple. "Why, you'd set any man or woman wondering."

"I don't see why."

"Be safer for me," said Whipple quickly. "No farmer's apt to have heard about me. We'll start when you're ready. Got any money?" She shook her head and he pulled out a sodden roll of bills. "Eight dollars, part Union and part Reb. Here's four for you in case we get separated. Where's your gun?"

"In the cave. But it's no good."

"Take it. It'll look good at least." He checked the charges in his derringer. "We'll follow this shoulder and keep clear of paths."

He took the lead and went on in clear sunlight that slanted down through the trunks where odd, parklike stretches alternated with wild thorn tangles. The air was fresh and fine with an underlying tang of running water and wet rocks. Here and there dogwood showed in pink and white clouds and rhododendrons held blood-red blossoms against black stone. Whipple felt that he could go on for hours before food became imperative. But the girl? He glanced back at her. She walked steadily on a few yards behind him, her face upturned as she mounted a slope. Her eyes were fixed on him as though she were oblivious to rock, tree, or flower. He waved reassuringly and pressed on. She would need food, and quickly.

He saw smoke to the left and went to investigate. At the small, tilt-roofed cabin a sallow man sold him milk in a gourd, a corn pone, and a few slices of ham. He asked no questions of Whipple and seemed glad to be rid of him. The girl was waiting quietly in the briars when he came back. He held up his purchases. "In luck for once. Drink that milk but take it very slow. I saw a whole company knocked out in Virginia through wolfing their rations after they'd been feeding thin."

She drank slowly and gratefully as Whipple divided the pone and the ham and began on his share, watching her as she ate. Color came back into her cheeks and she looked less strained. He gave her more pone and ham, made her drink more milk. "I know you

don't feel like eating any more. That's because you've been on short rations. Go on. Eat what I gave you."

She asked, "You're really going to take me to the Union lines?"

"I said so."

"What do I do then?"

"You've no kin to go to?"

She shook her head.

Whipple got up. "Then we'll see that you get sent where people will look after you. We'll talk to Kinnyard, to Mitchel. I'll telegraph my father. Maybe I could get leave and see you as far as Louisville."

Her glance fell. "I'll do whatever you say," she whispered.

"That's good. Wish I knew more about what had been going on. I've got an idea that we'll strike patrols or posses. They'll be looking for people dodging the draft but they may have been warned about me by telegraph. Look here — do you really think they'd bother to chase you after you got away from Dalton?"

"The people who got me out said so. I was to be sent down to Atlanta to be questioned. Father had done so much for the Union and the Rebels were furious. He was just one of a whole lot and they thought they could scare me into telling about them."

"Yes, I can see. Well, we'll just keep you out of sight. I've got to sharpen up my story a little. Wish I knew of some specific Georgia outfit to be heading for."

"That's easy. The 1st Georgia. They say it's very good. It's near Corinth now," she said.

"Fine. Finish up that milk. No, no more pone or ham. Got to save it. And give me that gourd. We'll fill it at the next brook. Here we go. Keep watching me and drop to the ground if you ever see me drop."

All morning they kept on, carefully scouting paths that crossed their line of march, taking advantage of high ground to study the country below them. By noon they hit onto a broken ridge that ran north and south, low grassy saddles alternating with bold peaks where the sun touched bare summits a thousand feet in the clear air. They ate again, sparingly, in a glade where jays streaked screaming in dazzling blue flight. "Any idea where we are?" asked Whipple.

"This is Missionary Ridge. When we cross it, we've got Lookout Mountain ahead of us. It's twice as high and not many passes." The

girl settled her back against a tree and closed her eyes as she ate. Through the last stages of the trip she had been keeping closer and closer to him, stopping beside him when he stopped instead of hanging back a few paces. Now she sat within two feet of him, seemingly content to relax utterly, as though in some safe shelter.

He said suddenly, "What's your name?"

Her brown eyes opened and she smiled at him. "It's Sharon — Sharon McDaniel."

"Nice name," said Whipple, studying the slope. "You know mine. Come on. Time to harness and hitch."

As they pushed on through the grassy saddle, he could hear her steps close behind him. Then he felt a little tug and looked around. Sharon had caught the skirt of his coat, very likely unconsciously, and was clinging to it while she helped herself along with a stick that he had cut for her. She was keeping up very well, he thought, but if a real crisis came he might have cause to regret having burdened himself with her.

Suddenly he threw himself flat on the ground, glancing back over his shoulder. Sharon had dropped with him and lay motionless. He signaled her to stay where she was and worked forward.

Between two boulders he looked down onto a ghost of a road, rutted, grassy, and studded here and there with saplings. To the right, it headed down into the saddle, to the left it curved out of sight, hugging high ground. Beyond the curve, hoofs sounded. He shrank closer among the rocks. A rider appeared, sitting at ease, a long musket balanced across his saddle. After him came eight horsemen and between them three bound men who walked heavily, eyes on the ground.

The little troop passed within ten yards of where he lay. The leader called back. "See anything of McCorrison back thar?"

A man answered, "Ain't far. He'll be 'long."

With a clank and a rattle they were gone. Except for the dying hoofbeats the old road was silent. A squirrel darted out in a series of jerky hops, perched on a rut, and gnawed busily at something held in its tiny paws. Whipple got to his feet and beckoned to Sharon, who had wriggled up close behind him. He whispered, "Get across the road, fast."

"Those prisoners! They must be Union people!"

"Can't help them. Sorry. We'd only get ourselves caught. Keep close. There are more behind that patrol."

They slithered down a long slope, ran across an open space, took to the woods on the other side. Sharon pleaded, "Can't we rest — just a minute? Please, Whipple. I'm so tired."

He hesitated, struck by her use of his first name. Then he shook his head. High on the ridge they had just left, men were shouting. Still farther off, hounds bayed. A thin voice came to his ears. "Two! I seen two more. In the valley!"

"Double-time," snapped Whipple. "They may stay up there but we can't take a chance."

The ground was flat under the trees, flat and a little soggy. Hurrying on, Whipple sniffed. His ears picked up the sound of running water. A few more yards and he stood on the bank of a swollen stream. It was only some twenty yards wide but it ran deep and swift. Sharon pulled up beside him and stared, panting, at the flood. Whipple said, "Wait here. I'll look for a ford or a bridge."

He left her leaning against a birch tree, looking silently at the water. He went downstream as far as he dared. The creek widened and there was no sign of a crossing. For a hundred yards upstream there was no improvement. He kicked at a rotten stump. "Oh, God *damn!* Now we're in for trouble."

He shrugged and went back to the birch where Sharon stood motionless, eyes on the ground. He said brusquely, "Sorry. Nothing else for us. Get your clothes off. We've got to swim."

Her face went dead white. "I can't swim," she whispered.

"Never mind. Get ready. If it's not too deep, I'll carry you. If it is, I'll have to tow you." He turned away from her, seized a long, fallen branch, and thrust it into the stream. "Six feet at least," he said.

Face averted, she said in a husky voice, "There's some other way."

"If there was, I'd try it. We've got to get across and we've got to keep your clothes dry or you'll get your death of cold. Hurry, now. They've got hounds with them."

She sank to the ground, her back against a tree. "I can't."

"You must want to see that Atlanta jail awful bad." She said nothing. "Or see me get hanged? A soldier not in uniform, in enemy country?"

With an effort she struggled to her feet. He could barely hear her thin "All right. Only —"

"There isn't any only. Aside from the cold, your clothes'd get waterlogged. I'll make it as easy as I can. Undress back of the bushes. I'll leave my clothes right here. You make up a bundle of both sets."

She said in a faint voice, "You're going — to carry me?"

"Too deep. Hey — maybe this'll do." He heaved at a log on the bank, launched it cautiously. It dipped and bobbed, then floated. He held fast to a broken branch that jutted from it. "That'll do. Long enough. Now when you're ready, get into the water here. Hang onto the log for all you're worth and balance our clothes on it. All our guns and powder and pepper are there. Understand?"

She had slipped out of sight behind a dogwood thicket and her voice came weakly. "Where will you be?"

"In the water, facing the other bank. I'm going to tow the log." He undressed quickly, tied up his clothes and boots, and stepped into the water. It was cold and the bottom was greasy with mud. He paddled to the end of the log, found a projecting stump and gave a tug. It was solid enough for his purposes. He looked downstream to gauge the current.

A very small voice from the bank said, "I — I'm coming in. I've got the clothes."

He nodded without looking around. "Watch the water. It's cold." He heard a splash, a deep gasp. The log quivered to a new weight, steadied itself. He struck out, the current lapping against his bare chest. Sharon's weight made progress a little slower but helped him by keeping the rear end of the log steady. His free arm rose, fell, rose in regular strokes. The alder-hung cove was closer and closer. He reached far out, caught an overhanging bough, and pulled hard. The log began to edge past him as his feet struck bottom. The log swung as though freed from a weight and a rounded white figure, topped by a sodden hat, splashed past him and disappeared in the alders.

He sputtered, "That's over," through chattering teeth and swam a few strokes below the alder patch, where he pulled himself ashore. He checked himself abruptly as a slim bare leg whisked away behind thick branches and a shaky voice called, "Oh, *please!* Not yet!"

He answered, "Thought you'd be farther upstream. Toss me my

clothes." The bundle sailed through the air and he untied it quickly, made sure that his powder was still dry. Then he wrapped a stone inside his undershirt and tossed it back. "Dry yourself with that. Rub good and hard." With the rest of his underwear he produced a brisk glow, then dressed quickly and went to the bank. On the far side he heard voices.

It was time to move. The pursuers might know of a near-by bridge, ford, or skiff. Ready or not, Sharon would have to start.

He worked back through the shrubs and suddenly saw her, hastily fastening the collar of her shirt. She looked pale and frightened. He caught up her coat and held it for her, saying in a low tone, "They're across the creek. Get into this. That's better. Now let me look at you." She turned her face reluctantly to him. Her cheeks were deeply flushed but her lips had a bluish tinge and her teeth chattered. He took her hands and found it hard to tell if her fingers were intensely hot or intensely cold. She kept her eyes mutely on him, while her round chin trembled.

He caught her arm. "You've got to run. Don't mind if you stumble. You won't fall, because I'm holding you. Fast as you can, now. Get your blood going again."

Side by side they raced through the woods. When he judged it safe to slow down, he released her arm. "That better?" he asked.

She bobbed her head and panted, "M-much." Coils of dark brown hair slid from under her hat and she tucked it back with a graceful gesture. The color in her cheeks was healthier now and most of the blue had gone from her lips.

He smiled down at her. "You're a good soldier. We'd better keep on. That must be Lookout ahead, isn't it?"

She trotted quietly on behind him, resuming her hold on his coat as through the fading afternoon they climbed the shaggy bastions of Lookout Mountain. High on the flank, so high that they could see the country beyond the crests of Missionary Ridge, Sharon panted that she could make out a roof not far to the left. Whipple threw his coat over her, made her as warm and secure as possible, and tramped off to it. It was a mountain farm housing a poor old couple who told him that they had two sons in the Georgia artillery. When Whipple said that he was going on to join the 1st Georgia, they forced food and corn whiskey on him, grew angry when he tried to pay for it.

As he was leaving, the woman caught his hands. "Like havin' one of ours back under the roof, seein' you by the hearth. God bless you."

When he rejoined Sharon, he carefully divided the fresh corn pone and home-cured bacon. After eating, they started up a rocky stretch. The air grew thinner as they climbed. The whole western slope was dark and the valley beyond it was an unbroken black sea. All at once red flared in Whipple's eyes and he stopped, a fresh wind beating against his face. Sharon stepped beside him and leaned her head wearily against his shoulder as she joined his stifled exclamation of awe.

They stood on a prowlike rocky point, two thousand feet up in the evening air. Below them, far, far down where thick pine forests were like lush grass, the Tennessee looped and wound its way, its waters blazing to the touch of the sun that dipped toward high, western hills. From the far right, the river came on, alive and shining, on past the twinkling chain of lights that was Chattanooga, on past eerie Moccasin Bend, then north once more past a great island. It lost itself, then glowed stronger to the touch of the westering sun, glowed and shone as it plunged south and then west as though to meet the sunset among the mysterious purple hills. More and more lights twinkled in Chattanooga, were repeated in the clean sweep of the sky that opened, dark and eternal, above Lookout Point.

Whipple turned away from the world that lay at his feet and looked at Sharon. "This won't do. You've got to get out of this wind."

"I'm not cold. I don't even feel tired up here. I want to stay."

"We're leaving. You're shivering worse than you did at the river. We'll make camp out of the wind. This is the last lap."

He led the way down the mountain, slanting inland from the river. The sun vanished and the last glow fled from the sky. He went slower and slower, Sharon resting a hand on his shoulder. He tossed a stone ahead of him and it vanished without a sound. "That settles it. A big drop in front. But we know there's solid ground to the left. We'll sit there and wait till the moon comes up." His feet struck a mossy patch by a wind-blasted pine. "Sit there, Sharon, or stretch out if you want to. How do your feet feel? I'll find some dry sand if I can and fill your shoes with it when you turn in. That'll dry out the leather. Want some milk? There's some in the gourd."

There was no answer. She had curled up on her side like a kitten, sound asleep. He took off his coat, spread it over her, and then settled back to plan for the morning.

The moon edged up slowly over the rim of Lookout Mountain. The far valleys and the great river stood out cool and silvery. Somewhere in the night a fox barked and night birds called hoarsely. The moon rose higher. Whipple explored the ground carefully. He found an incurving ledge, dry and sheltered. He shook the girl gently but she only burrowed her cheek deeper against her hat. He bent, picked her up, and carried her to the ledge. She was amazingly light and soft under the rough cloth of her suit. He set her down gently, covered her with his coat again, walked back quickly to the spot where they had first stopped, and stretched out after making sure that there was no chance of his rolling off into space. He shut his ears to the sound of Sharon's gentle breathing and resolutely went to sleep.

He woke before dawn, aware of pressure. He stifled an exclamation. Sharon lay beside him, her head on his shoulder and a corner of his coat crumpled in her hand. The rest of the garment was spread over both of them. As he moved, she opened her eyes, stared, only half awake. He said, "Why didn't you stay where you were? You were warm and sheltered there."

She rubbed her fists in her eyes like a baby. "I woke up and couldn't find you. I was scared." Her eyes closed and she settled back against him.

He got up as gently as he could. "We better start. Eat what you want. Here's the gourd, too."

She smothered a yawn and Whipple noticed her hands for the first time. They were a little tanned from exposure and crisscrossed with brier scratches, but they were well-shaped, with slim, tapering fingers. She said, "We'll really be down there? Where it's safe?"

Whipple shrugged. "I've never found a place that was safe so long as there were armies around. But down there's where we're going."

She said somberly, "The army! Why is our army always so far away? If they'd come into East Tennessee, the people there would be free. Men and women would be alive. Union people." She turned almost fiercely to him. "It *is* coming, isn't it? It's got to!"

"You'll have to ask Buell or Halleck about that. I just go where the battery goes," he said lightly.

She looked down into the valley again. "If you'd been there, if you'd lived there, you wouldn't laugh about it," she said sullenly.

Whipple touched her shoulder. "I wasn't laughing, Sharon. I don't know why armies go where they go. All I'm thinking of is getting one East Tennessee girl where she belongs with Union people."

She gave him a quick smile. "You've been wonderful to me. You *are* going to get me away, aren't you? Among the right sort of people?"

"Cross my heart. Now mess call's blowing."

An hour later they had dropped a thousand feet along the shaggy sides of Lookout. All through the morning they kept on through a fresh green world that seemed lifeless save for the chattering of squirrels and the harsh scolding of jays among the pines. By noon Whipple looked out from a little plateau toward the river. Sharon, at his elbow, asked, "Now where are we?"

"About opposite Jasper. We'd probably be safe now if we broke for the open, but I'm taking no chances yet. How are you holding out? Feet all right? Do you still feel chilled? Hear, hook my coat around you. Stand still a minute." He fastened the coat about her neck. "There you are. Now trot along. We'll hit left. Right by section — march!"

As the sun began its slow dip, Whipple found a watercourse that guided them straight across what seemed to be a long peninsula. A sign by a thread of a road said, "To Rankin's Ferry." He stopped short. "Old Stars used to patrol down this far, and that was before he planned his move east. Maybe — maybe —"

"Maybe what?" asked Sharon.

"Maybe it was because he liked to," laughed Whipple. "Don't ask questions. You go ahead for a change and tell me if you see anything from the next crest — that low one just ahead."

She struck out sturdily along a grassy path and Whipple followed. It was lucky that she had not tried to go to strange houses in that costume. The very sway of her hips would have given her away in a major-general's uniform.

He began to run. Sharon, at the crest, beckoned to him, point-

ing to the west. He pulled up beside her and she flung an arm about him, still pointing. He said, "God above!"

Close to their bank a broad, bargelike boat moved east, driven on by six oars. The men in the barge wore blue. At the stern, the Union colors fluttered.

Sharon said huskily, "It — it's the flag!" and the sun glinted on her wet cheeks.

His eyes swept the land that lay behind the near bank and cold fear struck him. He glanced quickly at Sharon. Absorbed by the sight of the colors, she had not seen what had caught his attention, the glint of metal, the blur of gray uniforms. Controlling his voice he said quietly, "Now wait a minute. We don't want to miss at the last minute. You run for the river as hard as you can. Yell. Wave your hat."

She stared at him. "What for?"

"To make them see you and head in. I'll cover you. Don't forget, we're still in enemy country. When you get to the boat, tell the officer in charge to have his men cover me when I break for it. It's all right. I can run faster than you can and I've got a gun. Start, now."

Her lips quivered. "Please don't leave me, Whipple."

"I'm not leaving you, just coming on behind you. Now — skip!"

She gulped, ducked her head, and began to run. As soon as she was out of sight among the trees he turned away and sprinted west, came onto high, clear ground, halted for an instant, and then ran faster. He threw a glance over his shoulder. The barge was working in toward the south bank. He could just see Sharon, running blindly on, still far from the river.

For an instant he had a sickening fear that the mounted men who pelted on toward the barge hadn't seen him. Their leader was pointing at the running figure that was Sharon. They could easily close in on her before she reached safety. Then one of the riders whooped and the whole troop swerved toward him. He checked his pace and waited for them to come to him. Sharon was out of sight. Two minutes more and she would be safe.

The riders were upon him, dropping from their saddles. A small, foppish man with major's braid on his sleeves snapped in a high voice, "Account for yourself, sir. Account for yourself at once."

The barge was out in the stream again, and a little drab-clad figure was huddled in the stern sheets. Relief, and then an elation that was far stronger than relief, swept over Whipple. Sharon's wanderings were over. She would be smart enough to ask for Kinnyard, who would see that she got straight to Mitchel. How her face would light up when she saw those camps swarming with blue uniforms, when she saw the old flag floating free on every side!

The major shook his fist and squeaked, "I said, account for yourself."

Whipple said pleasantly, "Sure. What do you want to know?"

"Everything! What are you doing here? Where are you from?"

"Off a farm in Fleming County, Kentucky. The Yanks burned it. I'm heading for Corinth to enlist."

The major frowned as Whipple looked over his shoulder to the river. The barge was almost out of sight, close to the north bank. "Pay attention to me, sir! You're going to Corinth to enlist? Why Corinth?"

"Went to Atlanta first, but I didn't want to sign up with any conscript outfit."

The men of the patrol, obviously militia, drew closer. A sergeant with grave, level eyes said quietly, "Any special outfit?"

"Sure. 1st Georgia. Heard it was about the best."

There was an approving rumble from the crowd. The major said, "Guess that's all right."

The sergeant cut in. "Just a minute, Major. You're from Fleming County? What's the county seat?"

"Flemingsburg," said Whipple, forcing a yawn.

"And maybe you could bound Fleming County?"

The question was unexpected. Andrews's coaching had not gone that far. Whipple eyed the man and then smiled. "Maybe I can ask a question. Where are you from?"

"Near Tibbs Bridge, Murray County, Georgia."

"Can you bound Murray County?"

The other stammered sheepishly. A few men chuckled and someone said, "Got you thar, Ty. Don't know's I could bound Whitfield, neither."

The major frowned importantly. "Guess you're all right. Had to question you, though. Been funny things happening. Some damn

Yankees captured a train and then scattered. We want to pick 'em up bad."

Whipple tasted fresh joy. The raiders were still at large and, with such a start, could well be close to the Union lines afoot. One of the men mounted. "Let's get goin'. Hell, if we hadn't stopped for this feller, we'd have picked off that barge easy."

"What barge?" asked Whipple.

"Down at the river. Yanks in it," said the sergeant.

Whipple raised his eyebrows. "Tough luck."

The sergeant swung into the saddle. "You're probably all right, as the major says. But we'd better take you to headquarters. If they pass you, we'll turn you loose."

Whipple looked at the major, who fumbled with his reins. It was clear that, despite the difference in rank, the sergeant was the real leader of the party. The major said uncertainly, "Well, if you think so, Ty."

"It's best. Set him up on that spare horse."

Reluctantly Whipple mounted a bony sorrel and the troop started off. He watched the men about him. They did not seem at all sure of themselves and he took renewed comfort from the fact. Long after night had fallen, they halted at a big house where a score of horses were tethered. The sergeant called, "Put our man in the room beyond the carriage house. Jim Marston, your platoon's responsible for him."

Whipple asked with feigned irritation, "What am I supposed to be? A prisoner?"

"I'm just not taking any chances. The boys'll search you."

The empty room beyond the carriage house smelled of well-kept harness. The detail searched Whipple, grumbling over their scanty finds — the derringer, the cartridge case, and the few dollars. One of them asked suspiciously, "What you tote a gun for?"

"Try living in Kentucky without one," said Whipple curtly.

"Guess that's so. What you got Yank money for?"

"Had to come through places where they wouldn't take ours."

A private muttered, "What the hell we got to guard this feller for? I aim to sleep."

"You'll do what Mr. Phelps says, 'cause he's sergeant," snapped another. "Tad, take this truck to the house. Yeh — the gun and the money and what-not."

As the man clumped out, Whipple asked, "What am I supposed to do now?"

"You're s'posed to set right here, and don't you study on gittin' away less'n Mr. Phelps says so."

Whipple sat down with a shrug. "All right, but I thought you were trying to get men into the army, not keep 'em out."

"Do look funny, damned if it don't. Well, we'll meal you and by that time Mr. Phelps'd ought to be back from Chattanooga."

Whipple stretched out on some sacking and considered his position. He felt fairly confident. He had only to stick to his story. Once convinced that release was the proper step, they would let him go. He looked at the watch which the guard had refrained from taking. Past seven o'clock. Sharon was probably being fed, somewhere within the Union lines. The raiders were surely out of danger. He frowned. "Yes, they're probably all right and if I hadn't been such a damn fool at Big Shanty, I'd be with them."

A guard brought him cold beef and bread and sweet potato pie which he ate with growing relish. When he had finished, the leader of the guard said apologetically, "Mr. Phelps'd like for you to come to the house. He's fresh back from Chattanooga."

Whipple followed the man. In the living room of the house, a long room scantily furnished, Phelps sat back of a battered table. At his side was a weary-eyed captain in regulation gray. Phelps nodded pleasantly as Whipple entered. "Take a chair, sir. Captain Porter, this is Mr. Whipple Sheldon whose story I wanted you to hear." He held out a leather case to Whipple. "Have a cigar. Talking's dull work."

Whipple lit up gratefully. The cigar was mellow and full-flavored. He thanked Phelps and took up his story, addressing himself to the captain. He talked slowly and good-humoredly, appealing to Phelps from time to time, saying, "As I told you, sir —" or, "You'll recall, Mr. Phelps —"

When he had finished, the captain nodded. "It's an old story, Mr. Phelps. Lots of people have come down to us that way."

Phelps smiled. "You're satisfied, Captain?"

"Sure to God am."

Whipple felt mild relief as he knocked the ash from his cigar. He had not really been worried, but —

Phelps said, "Then, as a mere formality, Captain, we'll just confirm that point I told you about." He raised his voice and called, "We'd be glad to have you step this way for a moment, sir."

A door at Whipple's right opened. He jerked his hand sharply, then recovered himself with an effort. He forced a smile and tried to make his voice sound hearty. "Well! Hello, Mr. Fuller!"

The conductor's keen face flushed and he slammed his hat to the floor. "God damn it, I hate to do this. Yes, Mr. Phelps. That's the man."

Whipple drove everything from his mind save the one great point. Fuller knew nothing of his connection with the raiders. He spoke as calmly as he could. "I was with Mr. Fuller all through the chase, Mr. Phelps."

"I see," said Phelps. "And he can account for all your moves from Big Shanty until the time we found you?"

"Hardly that. When we found the *General* abandoned, I saw that I couldn't help any more, so I kept on going."

The captain asked, "You didn't know anything about this Yankee patrol barge?"

"Not till I saw it. Then I hit away from the river to get away from it. That's when I met Mr. Phelps."

"Quite right," said Phelps. "But, look here, Mr. Sheldon, why didn't you tell us you'd been with Mr. Fuller?"

"Didn't seem to apply to your questions."

"No," said Phelps slowly. "I don't suppose it did."

"And now that Mr. Fuller's identified me —" began Whipple.

"Yes, that's just the point. I happened to run into Mr. Fuller at Captain Porter's office in Chattanooga. Mr. Fuller, suppose you tell Mr. Sheldon the rest of the story."

Fuller glanced at Whipple and then dropped his eyes. "I tell you, I don't like to do this but I've got to. We've been in touch with all the stations down the line to Marietta. The wires were fixed easy enough. Now, Mr. Sheldon, one of the guards at Big Shanty saw the crowd board the *General's* cars. He saw one of them fall and get left behind. He remembers it because the man was waving to Major Glenn's daughter, who was sitting in a buggy. Then that man ran toward the station and joined two other men and began to run after the *General*. The two men, of course, were Anthony Murphy and myself."

Whipple shrugged. "That doesn't tell much. A whole lot of people were running out of the station. You remember what it was like. How could the guard be sure who joined whom? And another point — would any of that gang have joined up with you and Mr. Murphy? That would have been plain damn foolishness."

Fuller looked steadily at him. "For some people, yes. Not for anyone who'd go blind at the big chance the way you did. When I got all those reports from down the line, and when I remembered how you melted from the *Texas* at the last second, and when I'd chewed it all over — why, I figured you'd done one of the best jobs I'd ever seen, sticking to us like that. All I can say is —" He held out his hand.

Whipple took it, as though surprised. "But all I did was to follow your lead and Mr. Murphy's. As for the rest of the stuff —"

Captain Porter yawned. "I'm glad to have Mr. Fuller's confirmation, but, as I told you, Mr. Phelps, I was satisfied as soon as this man began his story." He turned red-lidded eyes on Whipple. "What you've told us goes in every detail with what we've heard from — let me see — from Marion Ross, William Pittenger, Wilson Brown, Samuel Slavens, the Englishman Mark Wood — oh, from several others. Some were taken within twenty yards of the *General*. There was one whom we nabbed later who was smart enough to switch to another county than Fleming, but he couldn't give the county seat. That was the man Madden."

Whipple got to his feet. "All right. I was with them. I did miss the train at Big Shanty. I claim my rights as a prisoner of war, detailed for this job. I'm first sergeant, Kinnyard's Independent Ohio Battery, acting under orders." He felt a strange sense of relief as he spoke. "Tom Madden's a caisson corporal in my outfit. The rest are infantry and I don't know much about them except that their status is the same as mine. All of them."

"But you're out of uniform," said Porter.

Whipple smiled grimly. "The Union holds a lot of John Morgan's Raiders — not in uniform. Most of them were lucky if they had pants. They're held as prisoners of war. How do we differ from them?"

"That's for the courts to settle," said Porter. "Get your guard ready, Mr. Phelps. We'll start right away." He looked keenly at Whipple. "Just how many were there in that gang?"

Whipple gave a short laugh. "Five hundred. Or maybe a thousand. I just don't remember."

"Of course, of course," said Phelps. "But we do know there weren't many. And you came clear down here to — well, never mind that. Are there a lot like your crowd in Mitchel's outfit?"

"We're the undesirables," said Whipple. "This was just a way to get rid of us."

Fuller sighed. "I'd sure like to see the ones they kept at home, then."

As a mounted detail, regulars this time instead of militia, closed in about the porch, Fuller dropped his hand on Whipple's shoulder, started to speak, and then went quickly back into the house.

Wrists handcuffed behind his back, Whipple rode on through the night toward Chattanooga. The troopers about him began to talk among themselves. One said, "Huh! Big feller, ain't he?"

Someone answered, "He is. He sho' is."

"Mebbe he likes to swim?"

"Now I'd admire to know. Hey Yank, you like to swim?"

"Beat any of you at a hundred yards," snapped Whipple.

"Yeh-heh-heh. Yank allows he likes to swim. Whar he's goin' he'll git to see all the swims he wants in a coon's age."

Captain Porter wearily commanded silence and the troop rode on to the creak of leather and the clop-clop of hoofs. Whipple tried to figure out some reason for his guards' preoccupation with swimming, but could make no sense out of it.

Before dawn there was a halt of a few hours at a cluster of sheds where Whipple was fed and managed to get a little sleep. When the guards roused him they were still snickering about swimming. A buggy waited in the growing sunlight and Whipple was hoisted into the seat beside Porter. A man hopped up and passed a length of chain about Whipple's neck, looped it through the handcuffs, and secured the end behind the seat. As the buggy started off Whipple said to Porter, "I must be important as hell, with all these chains and guards."

Porter grunted, "You don't mean sour owl-feathers to me. This is orders." He relapsed into silence.

The road became smoother, changed into a street, and the buggy and escort rolled into Chattanooga. By a long building marked

"Crutchfield House" Porter reined in, snapped an order to the guard, and entered the hotel. People stopped on the board sidewalk to stare. A guard called, "Git over here, folks. Real live Yank. One of them as took the train."

They crowded on, staring. Whipple caught muttered comments. "Great day in the mo'nin'. A wonder he kin hold his head up and look honest folk in the face." . . . "This'll l'arn him to come down here, killin' and burnin'." . . . "Jail ain't nothin' new to him. Kin tell by his eye."

Porter stamped out of the hotel and jumped into the buggy. A guard said, "See Leadbetter?"

"Too early. Not sober from last night and not drunk for today."

"Where we goin'?"

"To the hole."

The buggy wove up a short hill and turned left, halting by a high stockade over which showed the top floor and roof of a brick house. A guard dismounted and drummed on the gate with a pistol butt. Bolts screeched and the gate swung open to show a thin, dried-up face in a mass of white hair. A whining voice bleated, "What the hell you want?"

Porter jumped out. "Another boarder for you. Get him in quick, Mr. Swims."

A sergeant loosened Whipple's chains. "Hear thet, Yank? Thar's all the Swims you'll crave to see. Git now. Right through the gate."

Whipple was shoved into a broad, grassless yard. The brick house was on a steep slope and the front of the second floor was at ground level. He was hurried down to the rear where a shaky wooden staircase climbed to the second floor. In the wall, almost covered by the stairs, a small barred window exhaled a thick, evil smell. The stairs swayed to his tread and he was butted into a room that was bare save for a stool and a table.

Porter was seated and writing busily as the door slammed behind Whipple. The unsavory Mr. Swims sidled to Whipple and nudged him with a bony elbow. "I'm jailer here," he whined. "My own jail. Got any money on you, friend?"

Whipple studied Swims. If this sidling, whining man was the jailer, prospects for escape looked bright. He bit back a curt answer and, to keep the unpleasant man in a good humor, said evenly, "Cap-

tain Porter's men took all my stuff last night. I'll have a little when they give it back to me."

Swims rubbed his gritty hands. "You'n' me'll git 'long all right. Jes' turn thet money over to me and, by shot, I'll have your ribs bustin' with fat. Or mebbe you got something I c'd sell outside and buy you a whole shote." He scuttled across the room as Porter put down his pen. "Here, you let me see them papers. You soldier-fellers got to give me my dues. I'm a citizen of the Confed'racy and I know my rights. Hey! Sufferin' God! Leadbetter said he'd pay me more a head than this. How you think I'm goin' to live?"

Porter pushed the pen at him. "Sign for the prisoner. File a claim later. It's none of my business."

As Swims painfully signed, he complained, "How 'bout this feller's money you're holdin' for him? He says you give it to me now."

"He can give you a fried pig's ear if he wants to. What truck he had's at headquarters for Leadbetter to look at soon's he's got his eyes straightened out for the day." His lips curled. "You'll get rich off this man, Swims. He had all of three dollars on him, maybe four. Get busy now. I've got to see him locked up."

Swims scowled at Whipple and dropped to his knees, prodding a key into a padlock on the floor. Then he heaved up a heavy trap door. A guard picked a long ladder from the wall and dropped it into the hole. A musket butt jarred Whipple's ribs. "Down with you, Yank!"

He was shoved to the edge of the trap and the stench that he had caught from the barred window rose in slow coils like a poison cloud. His throat contracted and he gasped, "What the hell's down there?"

"You — in a minute."

There was no help for it. He knelt, got his feet onto the rungs, moved down one step, then two. His shoulders were at floor level. He saw gray or brown legs close about the hole, saw clean sunlight filtering through the dust. His foot sought the next rung, found it. The stench grew heavier, settled in his throat, flowed into his lungs. He retched, looked downward over his shoulder, and horror froze him to the ladder.

Below him was a murky well where light from two tiny windows struggled feebly. A muttering rose and through the gloom vague shapes drifted toward the ladder, unreal, detached, wavering like

corpses floating upright in a putrescent sea. The jailer's boot brushed Whipple's knuckles and he reached for the next rung. The shapes floated nearer and the rusty gibberish thickened. There were heads and more heads swaying slowly. The whitish blurs of hands reached out clawlike. More and more hands. He kept on down the ladder mechanically, felt sticky dirt under his feet. Swims dropped from the last rung and Whipple moved closer to him. The jailer, at least, was flesh and blood.

Half blind from the transition from light to foul gloom Whipple could only stare as the shapes floated closer, drifted in a ring about him. Swims caught one of his hands, a key rasped, and the handcuff fell from his left wrist. The jailer whined, "Who's got a free hand? Here — you'll do. God damn it, cain't you scrooch closer?" Metal snapped. Swims, mumbling to himself, climbed the ladder, drew it up through the trap after him. There was a heavy crash and the darkness of the cellar increased. Whipple took a hesitant step, felt a tug. A hoarse voice said, "Easy, friend. You're sort of j'ined to me."

Darkness swayed about Whipple. He reached out his free hand to steady himself, clutched a thin shoulder barely covered by ragged cloth. The stench settled over him like a mask. He gagged, fought for breath. He could feel half-seen figures pressing closer about him. The same hoarse voice said, "'Tain't so bad, friend. You'll get used to it. Where you from?" Other voices took up the question. "What they git *you* fer?" . . . "What you been doin'?" . . . "Chris-a-mighty, what's happen' outside?"

Little by little his eyes became used to the darkness. He could see half-naked men close to him, could make out shaggy heads, bald heads peering over their shoulders. Hands pawed at his arms, touched his clothes. Someone said, "'Member now. He's new here. Git him to the window."

The man to whom he was shackled guided him over the uneven floor toward the lower window. With a shock he saw that it was still bright and sunny outside. He leaned against the wall, breathing deeply. The window was barely a foot square and the bars seemed solidly set in the stone sills. Foul air from the cellar rolled slowly out into the sunshine. Behind him, men were crowding close again and he could hear their muttered questions. He gripped one of the rough bars. He thought, "To hell with the stink. To hell with the

irons and Swims. There's a way out and I'll find it." He faced the arc of heads that formed about him. "I'm a Union soldier and —"

Men started in the foul gloom. "Soldier! One of our boys!"

Whipple went on, "That's enough for a while until I know more about you."

The man to whom he was shackled said, "Fair enough. We're Union, mostly out East Tennessee. We're here 'cause we just couldn't kind of admire the God-damn Confed'racy. They caught me bridge-burnin' last year. Name's Franklin Greene."

Other rusty voices creaked out. Some men had been bridge burners like Greene, hoping thus to paralyze Confederate troop movements against the great Union invasion, the liberation they prayed would come. Others had made speeches, published pro-Union papers, had guided parties through Rebel lines into free territory. Bad luck, bad judgment, or treachery of others had brought them to this foul jail.

A Negro voice said slowly, "I been here most six months, near as I c'n figger."

"Working with us?" asked Whipple.

"Jest tendin' my farm. Name's Lem. Been free five year, but a white man wanted my farm and he came an' burned my freedom papers and took me to the co'thouse. Jedge, he say I got to prove I'm free, but there don't no one come out an' swear he know I'm free. Plenty could of. Now if no one don't claim me before a year's gone, I gets sold at auction. Free papers done me a lot of good."

Greene said, "Forget it. We'll have Union troops here in a month and you'll get your farm back." He turned to Whipple. "Seems to me maybe you'd better know, all of a heap sort of, how bad this place is. Or had you rather creep up on it?"

"Go ahead," said Whipple.

"See that yard out there? That's all you'll ever do — just see it. See this cellar? Thirteen by thirteen foot. I paced it often. See all these folks here? Sixteen, countin' you. Nice clean floor underfoot, ain't it? You'll sleep on it and you'll pack mighty close 'cause they ain't room to slounge out."

Whipple's mouth was dry. "Wait a minute," he said. "You get out *sometimes*. How about latrines, washing, food?"

Greene said, "Take a good sniff and most of your questions is answered. Two big buckets in that corner. You can't see 'em but you

know they're there all right. That's the latrine or the privy or whatever you want to call it. Then twice a day, Swims lets down two buckets of water. They're in the opposite corner. You'll find you want to drink a hell of a lot more than you want to wash. Food comes down the same way. Swims gets paid two bits a head to feed us and you can figger how much of that he spends on food. We sleep like I said. If a man wakes up and wants a drink or needs to use the buckets, he's got to wake the feller he's hitched to and drag him along. So we try to be careful 'bout all that. That's how we live. And we're still alive and we're still hopin'."

Whipple said huskily, "You've tried to get out?"

Someone coughed with a hollow sound. "How the hell can we? Walls is thick and we got nothin' to dig with. Shackled, too. No chance to rush Swims 'cause he's got guards."

Whipple fought against despair. "There's *some* way out!"

"Sure is," said Greene.

"Then for God's sake let's take it!"

"There's an all-fired sure way. It wouldn't do you any good, though, and they ain't a man here'd want to take it. If we jest set up a holler that we're ready to take the oath to the Confederacy, he'd have the ladder down here faster'n you could swallow your spit. But no one seems to be figgerin' on hollerin' like that."

The dank cellar, the choking stench, the irons, Swims's malice, the threat of what coming days might bring, suddenly faded into proper perspective. The one important thing was the undying resolve that underlay Greene's unemotional statement. These men had a sure key to freedom and refused to use it. He said quickly, "That's what'll beat the Rebs."

"Well, we're in a war. Some folks say 'war' but they don't mean it. Guess we mean every second of ours. We ain't alone though. You mean yours, else you wouldn't be a soldier."

Whipple felt a twinge. Yes, he had meant his war — but for himself, for what he could gain by it. He said, "I've been in a few scraps but I've never seen anything to equal you people in here."

"We ain't doin' anything," said Greene. "Not like soldiers, I mean. Now we got rules here we have to live by. You stood by the window long enough and you're blocking the air from getting in. Most times we don't let anyone stand there. You get to notice it mighty quick if

it's blocked. When food comes down, I dole it out. No grabbing. Same with water. You'll sleep a lot 'cause the air's bad and we go kind of careful about wakin' a man that's asleep. You best learn your way around the cellar because the light'll never be better than it is now. Walk with me and count your steps. And I'll show you which buckets is which."

It was late afternoon, to judge by the slant of the sun outside, and Whipple lay stretched on the floor beside Greene. Other prisoners paced about, leaned against the walls, or slept as Greene slept. Whipple wondered if Sharon had reached Mitchel's headquarters yet, wondered where the other raiders were. He hoped that Sharon was being well looked after. He thought back to her escape and it suddenly struck him that even with the telegraph restored, news had spread with phenomenal speed through the South. He sat up. Had he been fool enough to tell Penn Grainger about the expedition? Then he realized with relief that he had not heard of it until after his return from her house. But he had told her far too much of other things. And she would be just as clever at using things against the Union as Sharon had been at working for the Union.

A sudden draft of fresh air swept through the cellar and men began to sit up. The trap door was open and the end of the ladder edged through. Whipple made out the legs of the guard, the spindleshanks of Swims, then another pair that began a cautious descent to the rattle of chains. Whipple watched eagerly. "May be one of my crowd," he said to Greene, who was sitting up.

Greene shook his head. "This ain't nothin' but a boy. You fellers was all soldiers."

Whipple dragged Greene to his feet and pushed toward the ladder just as the newcomer reached bottom. He caught his shoulder. "Will! Will Pittenger! Where are the others?"

Pittenger gulped. "Who—who are you?"

"Whipple Sheldon. I was with you and Tom and Ross on the road."

Pittenger gave a gasp of relief. "Sure—sure. Where am I? Oh, dear Lord!" He began to gag.

Greene hurried him to the window. "Make room, boys. Swims ain't shackled him to no one. There. Whuff till your head clears."

Someone mumbled, "By chops! We goin' to git to talk to *two* fellers from the outside the same day. Two!"

Whipple stood close to Pittenger, questioning him eagerly. The latter shook his head as he answered between gasps. "Don't know where anyone is. What a stink. I can't stay here. I was in a good jail last night. Sure. Caught me in the country. Men and dogs. The *General*? Ran out of water, ran out of fuel. Mostly ran out of time. Everything went wrong. Except Andrews."

"I bet!" thought Whipple. He asked aloud, "Where's Tom?"

"Saw him hitting out. Whip, what are they keeping us here for?" He swayed on his feet.

Whipple said to Greene, "Talk to him. He's a good soldier. He'll steady down all right." He listened to Greene's calm voice, moderate and reasonable, as the latter spoke to Pittenger. Later, the three sat on the floor while Pittenger reconstructed the locomotive chase. The others formed an eager ring, listening openmouthed to this tale of the daring attempt of their own people, Union people. Pittenger concluded, "We didn't have an idea that anything could come up from the South. I tell you, Whip, when we heard that whistle, we just about doubled up. We'd have quit then except for Andrews. Don't worry. He'll get us out quick."

It was obvious that Pittenger was completely under the Virginian's spell. Tom had been about as bad. But *what* could have been Andrews's motive? To get several groups of Union men, out of uniform, in Rebel hands to offset the homespun prisoners taken from John Morgan? To act as hostages to prevent more drastic actions being taken against those non-uniformed troopers? There was *something*. There *had* to be.

The trap swung open again and the men sprang to their feet and tramped to the space under it. Swims cackled, "Dinner, boys! Turkey an' duck an' side-meat an' grits—" In the lighted square a bucket dangled and eager hands reached for it. The bucket checked, slid up a few feet, and Swims called, "You in a hurry? Buttin' in like a sty of hogs! Heh-heh-heh! Try it again." The bucket came all the way down and the trap closed.

Greene said, "You 'n' me'll have to get to the window, Sheldon, so's I can see to divide."

In the last flush of outer light, Whipple stared into the bucket.

There were a few slabs of corn bread and a heap of slices that smelled like rancid pork. Greene talked calmly on. "This is the usual. Now the boys that's been here longest is gettin' weak, so I give them the biggest chunks. Here's Joe Cate's. Give it to him, will you?"

Whipple turned sick. Cate's extra ration barely covered the palm of his hand. Cate took it greedily as Greene doled out food to the others. There was a dull sound and Pittenger tossed his share back into the bucket. "I ate well before I came down here," he said.

Whipple dropped his food in with Pittenger's. "God damn it, Greene, this can't go on. Get over to the trap with me." He dragged the protesting Greene with him and began to shout, "Swims! Hoy! Mis-ter *Swims!*"

The trap opened and Swims giggled, "Don't you like them prime ducklin's with fixin's?"

Whipple shouted, "They're great. But duck's not hearty enough for these boys. If I give you money, will you send out and buy something else?"

Swims's head popped deeper into the trap. "You got money I ain't knowed about?"

"No. I've got a watch here. Take it to town and sell it. Buy us some more food."

"What you want me to buy?"

Whipple found an excited ring about him. "What'll you eat, boys?"

A voice quavered, "Wheat bread an' 'lasses. Gallons of 'lasses." Others panted in eager approval. Whipple called, "Bread and molasses then. Get a lot."

Swims dropped a line with a small box fastened to it. Whipple placed his watch in it and saw it drawn up. The jailer whined, "Kind of scratched."

"Don't worry. It's good gold."

Swims gave a sudden cackle. "Sure, I'll sell it. I'll sell it." The trap slammed.

Time slipped on. Men chattered excitedly, "Gonna let that 'lasses jes' trickle down my chin!" . . . "Hyah-hyah! Who wants my pork? Wheat bread an' mo-*lasses* comin'!"

There was no sound from the room above. Whipple grew uneasy. At last he asked, "How far does he have to go for the stuff?"

A man answered, "They's a smart ol' groc'ry right on Third Street, next the jail. I ain't frettin'. Reckon it takes a powerful time to get swell fixin's like that."

Anger burst inside Whipple. He began to shout for Swims but there was no answer from the trap. He exploded, "Get me something to stand on! I'll rip that trap out of the floor. Will! Will Pittenger. Get over here. Climb on my shoulders and slam your chains against the trap till it busts. Slam 'em."

By his side, Greene spoke. "No use, Whip. Trap's thirteen foot up and locked and barred."

Suddenly the trap flew open and a man in uniform looked down. "Shut your God-damn mouths!"

Whipple yelled, "Who the hell are you?"

"Officer of the guard!"

Whipple shouted, "Then do something. I'm a Union soldier. These men are being starved. I gave Swims my watch to sell to buy them extra food. You're a soldier. I demand that you do something about it. He's been gone over an hour."

The officer seemed to reflect a moment. "You mean you gave Swims your watch to sell for food?"

"That's what I told you."

There was a contemptuous snort. "If you was God-damn fool enough to trust Swims with a watch, I'd say you was too much a God-damn fool to git trusted with a watch." The trap pounded shut once more and its echoes were replaced by a wailing, low and inarticulate.

Whipple snarled at Greene, "Why didn't you warn me that'd happen?"

"Take it easy, friend. We couldn't know. We ain't none of us had a thing to give him, so we couldn't find out. Sure, it's hard on the boys but they know your heart was actin' right. Reckon it's the first time since we come here that someone's tried to do something *for* us, 'stead of *to* us."

"From now on," said Whipple, "we're going to start figuring on doing something for all of us and that's get out of here."

An immeasurable time later a heavy clamor beat at Whipple's ears. Feet pounded on the floor above, chains banged and clanked and harsh voices echoed. He sat up, found that Greene knelt fully awake beside him. Whipple muttered, "What the hell's that?"

Greene whispered, "I'm scairt. Sounds like more —"

The trap groaned open and again a brook of pure air flooded through the cellar. High in the ceiling a lantern flashed down on the worn rungs of the ladder which was being lowered. Shadows danced and wavered in the light and a dark figure began the descent while two more seemed to wait just above. The three were connected by a long chain. Greene's voice cracked as he shrieked, "No! No! Don't send no more down here! We'll smother, I tell you!" Other men took up the cry. "Swims! God damn you, want to choke us? We ain't got air left to fill a mouse!"

With a clink of metal three fettered men came down the ladder. The lantern swung lower and flared into the gloom. Whipple cried out and dragged Greene forward. "Tom!" he shouted. "Tom! They got you!" Tom Madden's shackled hands caught Whipple's shoulders. He called huskily, "It's Whip, boys! Whip! He's safe." He rocked Whipple back on his heels while the latter shouted inarticulately. The lantern dipped lower. Will Pittenger croaked, "Marion! Marion Ross! And —"

Whipple stared past Tom at the two figures slowly descending the ladder. He stood frozen, almost oblivious to Tom's grip and his flood of questions. Ross reached the ground, the last man followed carefully but easily. Whipple edged past Tom, still staring. He said to Greene, "Come on. This is something that's got to be done." He started for the ladder which was being slowly pulled up through the trap.

In the last gleam of the lantern, Whipple held out his free hand. "I was wrong about you from start to finish, Mr. Andrews. So far as I'm concerned, you're still in command. Tell me what you want us to do now."

The light had gone and Andrews was a tall blur in the dark. His handclasp was firm and assured. He said in a pleasant, even voice, "You must be Whipple Sheldon. I was worried about you. As for action, there's only one thing to work for. We've got to get these boys out." Vague shapes began to drift toward Andrews, whispering and murmuring. "Who are these gentlemen, Sheldon? We've got to look after them too, you know."

P A R T I I I

James Andrews

THE huge map covered one side of the farmhouse room near Huntsville, Alabama. General Ormsby Mitchel had to stretch to the full limit of his five feet six inches as his finger traced the east-west course of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Chalky blue marks showed the Union holdings from the east beyond Stevenson close to the Georgia line, then west through Huntsville to Tusculum and Florence by Muscle Shoals and the Mississippi border. The noon sun beat across Mitchel's clean-shaven face, accentuating the down-drawn corners of his mouth and the gray of his manelike hair.

The blue marks represented the fruits of his quick dash south and cryptic symbols dotted here and there showed the force available to hold this long line. The wrinkles about his mouth deepened. His strength was spread terribly thin. Two thousand men were doing work on which twenty thousand could be used, twenty thousand whom Halleck could easily spare from his masses in the northwest. Mitchel, strengthened, could strike hard through Rome in Georgia right on to Atlanta and the sea. Or he could sweep into Chattanooga, drive north and into Virginia, freeing East Tennessee as he went. The war could be won only by hitting hard and moving fast. That was axiomatic to him, if not to the cautious, pedantic Halleck. And control of the railroads would allow him to hit hard and fast, while paralyzing his enemies.

He stepped to his paper-stacked desk and picked up a telegram from his superior. In response to Mitchel's plea for more men to hold the railroads, Halleck had said, in effect, that railroads had no place or bearing in military operation. Mitchel dropped the telegram and stood before the map again, hands behind his back. If no more troops were forthcoming for him, he would go on with what he had. At least, he had placed the nucleus of an army in the heart of the South. If those above him were blind to the fact, then he himself would have to make his two thousand look like ten thousand

or more. They must be light and mobile. Armored trains, fortified posts capable of mutual support, locomotives and flatcars in readiness to shift troops to meet any threat. Wheels must multiply his men. It was all very well to reason as Halleck reasoned, basing everything on what Napoleon or Soult or Masséna would have done under given conditions. But past and present must be linked. What would Napoleon have done, given railroads and telegraph wires?

His shoulders sagged as he took his seat at his desk. It was maddening to work on under the stupid inertia that pressed down on him from the higher levels of command. He ran his hand through his hair and wondered if perhaps he might not perform more valuable and lasting service by resigning and going back to his astronomical work. He raised his head dully as an aide knocked at the door. Then his eye brightened. This might be the long-awaited word from James Andrews. "What is it, Crane?" he asked.

"Young lady to see you, sir."

Mitchel raised his eyebrows wearily. "It's about damage claims, I suppose. Can't Braden look after her?"

"She says she's got a letter to you, sir. From the right sort of people."

Mitchel rose quickly. "Show her in at once," he said.

He glanced keenly at the girl. She was very pretty, he thought, and yet her young face was worn and there was an odd, fixed look to her brown eyes.

Mitchel pointed to a chair. "Please sit down, young lady, and tell me what I can do for you." She laid a letter on his desk and he set it aside. "Let's look at that later when you've told me your story."

Her eyes grew even more somber as she began in a low, hesitant voice. "I'm Sharon McDaniel. I've just come through the lines from Atlanta." She studied the man across the desk, summoning her courage to go on. He wasn't big but his face was stern, like the picture of Andrew Jackson that used to hang in her father's study. She repeated a little breathlessly, "Through the lines from Atlanta."

He said gravely, "I see. From Atlanta."

She clasped her hands, hoping for more comment. There was none. He was giving her no help. She burst out, "It's all in the letter. And—" She was on her feet, both hands outstretched.

"You've got to get him out. He gave up his chance of getting through so I could escape. He did. I could guide your men. I could —"

Mitchel held up his hand. "Just a moment, please. Who is this 'he'?"

"Why, Whipple Sheldon, of course. He was with Mr. Andrews and the others."

Mitchel shot up from his chair and strode to the door. "Crane! No one is to come near this door until I open again." He seemed, suddenly, for all his short stature, to loom big over Sharon and the intensity of his eyes startled her. "What about Mr. Andrews?" he asked sharply.

"They caught him."

Mitchel stiffened. "Where?"

"Near Ringgold in Georgia. They've taken him to Chattanooga."

Mitchel swung abruptly on his heel and stared out of the window. The room was very still and Sharon could hear a few discordant notes drifting in from the outside as a bugler blew tentatively, preparatory to sounding a call. Mitchel walked slowly back to his chair. He no longer looked grim, only tired and deeply concerned. Sharon felt somehow that part of that concern touched her. He leaned his arms on the desk. "Please excuse me. Odd people come through the lines sometimes. Now about Mr. Andrews. You're sure of that?"

Sharon nodded. "It's all in the letter. And then I was with Mr. Sheldon. He's first sergeant in Captain Kinnyard's battery. He told me that the *General* broke down or something and all Mr. Andrews's men scattered."

"Did he tell you that Andrews had been taken?"

"Oh, no! He thought all the others had got away. I heard about Mr. Andrews when I got across the river and found some of the right sort of people. When I heard that, I knew they'd taken him to Chattanooga."

"Now just how did you reach that conclusion?" asked Mitchel.

"That's General Leadbetter's headquarters. They surely wouldn't send him to General Kirby Smith at Knoxville."

Mitchel smiled grimly. "That might be obvious to a soldier, but that a young lady should reach —" He picked up the letter. "Guess we better read this right now."

Sharon watched him anxiously as he studied the close-written lines. His face was impassive. Then he laid the letter down and rose, holding out his hand. She took it timidly. His voice was surprisingly gentle. "My deepest sympathy, Miss McDaniel. I never met your father, but I knew of his work. And I *do* know the writer of this letter, very well. So you worked with Temple McDaniel. He'd be glad to know that you've brought us one more piece of news. I'll act on it right away."

New light came into her eyes. "You will? Now?"

Mitchel opened the door and called, "Crane! Telegraph Colonel Sill that the Western and Atlantic line to Atlanta is still open. Confirm in writing by the afternoon train." He banged the door shut and came back to his desk.

Sharon said eagerly, "And you'll start men out right away. I can guide them, I told you."

Mitchel shook his head slowly. "That's all I can do. Just let Sill know that Andrews failed to block the line."

"All you can do?" repeated Sharon in a low tone. Her lower lip quivered. Then she sprang to her feet, her small fists on the desk. "But Mr. Andrews and his men at Chattanooga! A lot of his men, they told me. Aren't you going to do anything about them?"

Mitchel looked surprised. "My dear young lady, I can't besiege Chattanooga for the sake of a few prisoners."

She made a quick, brushing motion. "What's Chattanooga? Lead-better's only got six poor regiments there."

"I simply haven't got the troops."

Sharon's knuckles drummed on the desk. "Those men are there because they tried to help you. You know what'll happen to them. You can't let it happen."

Mitchel's chin sank into his stock and his voice was flat. "They accepted a known risk. I can't move for them."

Her voice rose. "But they moved for you and now you turn your back on them. And there's more than just those men. There's all East Tennessee, my people, Union people, waiting and praying for you to come. I've heard you've got troops almost into Mississippi. What good are they doing? Bring them east and drive out the Rebels. For every man you send in, five, ten loyal Union men will come to you. People won't live in fear, won't have to hide in the

mountains because they're true to the flag. What do you care about fighting Mississippi planters off there when nearly half a state is waiting for you right here?"

Mitchel sank lower in his chair. He moistened his lips. "I know. And I can't do a thing."

Sharon cried out, "But the men at Chattanooga! There's Whipple Sheldon. He let himself get caught so I could escape. He fooled me into running on ahead and then they took him. Otherwise, he'd be right back with his battery now. What do I matter? I could be captured a dozen times over. But he—he's a Union soldier who volunteered for dangerous work and you turn your back on him." Her hand slammed against a pile of papers, sent the topmost skidding to the floor. Mechanically she picked it up, as mechanically glanced at it. It was a telegram, obviously in code. The letters WHIRLAV floated before her eyes. She turned to go, laid the paper on the desk, saying automatically, "That's from Corinth."

Mitchel reared up in his chair. "How do you know that?"

She said dully, "It says so. I'd like to go now, please."

Mitchel was on his feet. "That's in the Reb code. Turchin captured a telegraph office and intercepted it. We can't read it. Do you mean to say that you can?"

"No," she said wearily. "Just the 'Corinth.' Father had the code from a Union man who operated the telegraph near us. They shot him too, of course. Good-by, General Mitchel."

He slid around the desk and caught her arm. "You've still got work to do."

She freed herself. "There's nothing more for me to do."

Mitchel said gently, "You said that *you* didn't matter. None of us do, except in our work. This telegram may be important and you've got part of the key to it. We need that key."

She shook her head. "I've no key. I just remember WHIRLAV. I used to see it on the heads of telegrams and it reminded me of a horse I had called 'Whirly.' That's all."

Mitchel pushed a chair to the desk. "There. Take that pencil. Knowing just one word may give us the rest. Set down the letters. W equals C, H equals O, and so on."

She sat down, ran a hand over her forehead, and reluctantly bent

over the sheet. Mitchel watched eagerly. The letters blurred before Sharon's eyes, slowly arranged themselves. "Mna Phia dhssrmle —" She bit the end of her pencil. "Oh dear, I'll never be able to get this." Hopelessly her eye ran down the sheet. At the very end a grouping indicated a signature. There was something familiar about the arrangement. Without her realizing it, the task began to absorb her. She asked quickly, "How many letters in 'Beauregard'?"

"Ten. Why?"

Her pencil touched the grouping. "Z. L. Qynkavzump," she read. "Or P. T. Beauregard. Set that against the alphabet you've got there. Try the first line."

Half an hour later Mitchel frowned over the completed task and tapped his fingers on the desk. From Corinth, Beauregard was telegraphing that Van Dorn was joining him with thirty-five thousand men. Kirby Smith must, with whatever means he had, draw Mitchel away from that vital east-west railroad, or the western armies would wither. Mitchel thought deeply. In the event of an actual threat from the northeast, he automatically assumed command over Negley and Duffiel to the north of him. If the threat were strong enough, Buell would detach still more men to send on to him. He made up his mind. He would take the risk, move at once, sending the telegram on to Halleck, through Buell. They would be forced to act. He looked at Sharon. "Young lady, I'm going to start for Chattanooga at once. How far we'll get depends on Halleck and Buell. But we'll start."

Her eyes brightened. "And you'll get Mr. Sheldon and the others?"

"They're a by-product. If we get Chattanooga and they're in it, we'll find them. Now, before I start planning, there is something I want to say to you. Please sit down again." She obeyed, wondering. He said slowly, "You've done good work for the Union and you seem naturally adapted to it. How about keeping on with it?"

"Keep on? How can I?"

"I'll show you. But there's something you've got to understand first. With the death of your father and the destruction of your home, you must feel bitterly toward the Secession people. That won't do any good. If we could free all East Tennessee, the war'd still be going on. If you want to work, it'll have to be because you're *for* the Union, not *against* Secession. There's a big difference."

Sharon shook her head. "If you free East Tennessee, everything else will be simple. Those people have got to be brought back into the Union."

"You're wrong, I'm afraid, about everything else being simple. But you're right on one point, a big one. You want those people back in the Union rather than vengeance against the Secesh. That's in proper proportion. Here's what I want you to do. I'll give you a letter to a Mrs. Hubert Ingalls, here in Huntsville."

Sharon's brown eyes widened. "That's the Slade Ingalls family. They're as rabid as Jeff Davis!"

"Yes. And this Mrs. Ingalls is, too. Outwardly. Actually, well you'll see for yourself. You'll live with her for a while and be more extreme than she is. You'll be under surveillance and you'll report to the provost here from time to time, just as Mrs. Ingalls does. Sometimes, you'll have urgent family business that takes you away from Huntsville. You'll be brought before me for a travel permit which I'll grant with the utmost reluctance. You'll find it all very galling — and very useful. Probably a good many of your trips will take you into East Tennessee, perhaps right up to Knoxville where Kirby Smith is."

Sharon nodded slowly. "I'll do what I can. And — oh, General Mitchel, when do you think you'll get to Chattanooga?"

The roll of the raiders was complete and every last man of the twenty-four who ran for the *General* at Big Shanty now lay, handcuffed separately or shackled to a mate, in the foul cellar of Swims's jail. Franklin Greene and the other Tennessee Unionists, along with Lem, had been moved to the floor above, to make room for them. While church bells tolled with a sweet resonance beyond the spreading green of the trees that showed above the stockade, Whipple and Tom stood on either side of the tiny barred window and watched the slow coming and going of the gray-clad sentries in the bare yard. The rest of the group squatted on the dirt floor where Andrews stood, erect and commanding. During the days and nights that had spilled the captives by twos and threes down the ladder, the big Virginian had remained calm and quiet, seemingly unmoved by his surroundings.

Now, silhouetted against the light of the high north window

Whipple saw him throw back his head in the old, dynamic gesture. Madden whispered, "Hey, Whip! Something's coming."

Whipple nodded, his eye on the crouching men. A change had come over them. They were no longer a band of captives, jammed into a stinking hole and fed on rotting food. From the instant Andrews had said quietly, "Now, boys, gather round," they had become a purposeful, welded group, waiting to act on the command of their leader.

Hands resting easily on his hips, Andrews began in a level, carrying voice. "I didn't want to take stock until we were all together. Now that they've moved the last of our Tennessee friends upstairs we can really add things up. Not that they couldn't be trusted, but we're men on a special job that only concerns us — and the Union. We can talk freely. I asked Franklin Greene to pound on the floor above if Swims comes in there. Sheldon and Madden will signal if the guards come too close to the window, so that's all right. As for our job, there's no question that I failed. It's no use saying that the flick of a feather would have turned things into a greater success than I had imagined possible. The feather didn't flick." He paused, looked about the dim cellar. No one spoke. Andrews squared his shoulders. "I failed — so far!"

By the window, Tom muttered, "What did I tell you? He's not done."

"Uh-huh. And the boys know it," said Whipple, aware of a stir that passed over the group. "Use your eyes and ears on him, Tom. I'll watch the Rebs."

"Just the same," Andrews went on, "even if we don't do anything more, the failure's not complete. I can tell you some of the things you've done. In the first place, you've sent the Rebs into a panic. They're so scared by your coming down here, by your seizing the *General*, that they're going to guard every inch of line that they can spare a man for. And I don't mean just the Western and Atlantic. I mean every rail that they hope to control and use. That doesn't mean tying up hundreds of men. It means tying up thousands. And I can tell you that they need every man they've got in the battle line, not watching a culvert or a bridge or a roundhouse."

Marion Ross, sitting at Tom's feet, whistled. "By God! It'll mean busting up whole regiments just to guard a stretch of track."

Andrews shook his head. "Not regiments, Ross. Brigades and divisions."

Tom said, "Why can't they use militia, Mr. Andrews?"

"That will amount to the same thing, Tom. That militia will have to be in the field all the time and the men who make it up will be taken from farms and factories. They'll have to draw on farmers, overseers, lathe hands—every walk of life. And they can't afford to. Yes, I think that you can count this one point as an appreciable gain for the Union."

Knight, the engineer, muttered, "Worth mighty near the whole trip, I'd say."

"No," said Andrews. "For the simple reason that it's not what we were after. But it *is* a gain. Now another point. We've got two blockades going against the Confederacy. You've heard a lot about the sea blockade and the blockade-runners and so on. But there's a land blockade, too, and a good one. Likewise, there are land blockade-runners. Some of you boys know what I used to do. Others of you don't. I ran the land blockade and —"

Someone in the gloom started. "*You* been —"

Andrews held up his hand. "It was with the full knowledge and consent of the President, of General Halleck, General Buell, and General Mitchel. I took things through by pack mule, things that are hard to come by in the South—drugs, mostly, surgical kits, needles, whalebone. What I brought made me welcome throughout the Confederacy," continued Andrews. "I found old friends. I made new ones. I guess I went pretty high. I have talked quite intimately with generals and cabinet ministers. I —"

Pittenger burst out, "And all the time knowing that one slip —"

"That's beside the point," said Andrews sharply. "It was hateful work, but work that had to be done. That part of it may be all over. I was seen at a dozen stations along the line; I talked with officers I knew. But —" he smacked his fist into his palm — "there were plenty of other actual runners. I could name a dozen myself. They didn't climb as high as I did and now they'll be trebly suspect. The overland blockade-running will be cut to a trickle because they won't know who is real and who isn't. They'll *have* to treat them all as spies. Not only that, they'll have to treat every single traveler as suspect. That'll mean guards at crossroads, stations, ferries, boat

landings. It'll be as hard to cross the South as they say it is to cross Russia. A planter shows a letter, say, from Kirby Smith. What of it? That letter can't be half as good as the ones I had from Judah Benjamin and Beauregard and Wade Hampton—all those letters that I burned in the *General's* firebox. General Van Dorn vouches personally for a Georgia editor? Hundreds of people saw poor Albert Sidney Johnston meet me at Corinth, and with his whole staff."

"I guess that's good reasoning," said Tom.

"It's more than reasoning. It's sure knowledge. I, of course, may be discredited in this part of the South now. But there are other parts. Actual word of all these results has reached me—and since we abandoned the *General*. There's one other gain and maybe it's the biggest of all. It's nothing you can see or touch. It's a moral gain and it's due entirely to you men. I don't come into it at all. A lot of us Southerners are inclined to be pretty sanguine by nature. A lot of us didn't think that a Northerner would ever turn into a fighter. Just why some of us thought that I don't know. Northerners and Southerners are Americans equally. But the idea was mighty strong in some quarters. You've shocked a whole lot of people all through the South by your striking down here. It's the boldest coup of the war, and done by Union soldiers. The news has spread like spilling quicksilver. It's making people wonder. Some of them it's shaken badly. Napoleon said that in war the moral is to the physical as ten is to one. In your case, I'd put it mighty close to a thousand to one. Again—I'm not reasoning this out. I talked with Southern officers. I've been questioned pretty thoroughly and I could see a lot that lay behind the questions. I've seen newspapers. You've given the South a hard jolt."

From across the gloom a man growled, "Yeah. But this cellar still stinks and my guts are sour with this swill we have to eat."

Andrews turned sharply. "We're all in the same cellar, eating the same food. If you don't like to think of the good effects you've produced, here's a bad one that we've all got to think about. I said we've given the Confederacy a bad jolt. That jolt has infuriated a lot of people down here. Some of you were lucky to get away from mobs that wanted to string you right up. Jake Parrot was flogged at Ringgold before they brought him on here. Well, here's another

thing that happened. Two days ago they finally caught one of the bridge burners who'd been with Franklin Greene last winter. They rolled him downhill in a barrel full of spikes and then hanged him. Does that make the cellar smell any better?"

A low murmur ran over the group.

Andrews went on. "So keep in mind the actual things that you've accomplished. Now for the future. You either escape or you stand trial. In the latter case, you ought all to be on pretty firm ground so long as you stick to your story. You were ordered on this job as soldiers, and as such they've got to treat you as prisoners of war. The worst that can happen is that you'll be sent to a Reb prison, and when that happens, Mitchel will be notified and will arrange for exchange. On all counts, military law protects you."

Whipple called out, "Just a minute. That's all right. But how about you?"

Andrews said calmly, "My case is quite different."

Tom burst out, "It sure is. Let's get busy about that. Your case —"

"Is quite different," cut in Andrews. "Now as to escape — well, people have got out of worse jails with heavier chains on them. We won't be working alone. I've dropped enough hints to let you know that I'm not entirely out of touch with the outside world. We'll get busy with plans. But first, we'd better practice your defense in case you come to trial before we get away. Mart Hawkins, what inducements were offered you to join the man Andrews?"

Hawkins stirred in the gloom. "Was detailed."

"You mean you didn't know what you were going to do?"

"That's right," said Hawkins more glibly.

"Are you trying to tell me that your officers were callous enough to send you off on this idiotic venture without giving you any choice? You may hang, you know."

"I'm a prisoner of war, captured on detail."

"Try to sound a little more surly," said Andrews. "Now, Hawkins, when you learned from the man Andrews what you were going to do, why didn't you withdraw?"

"Under orders," growled Hawkins. "Couldn't pull out, not in the Union Army. And I never did know what was planned till we hopped the train at Big Shanty."

"Good. Only don't be so quick with names. Say 'at that station

down the line' or something like that. Sounds more natural."

The drill went on. Tom and Whipple followed as best they could, fighting against the eternal urge for sleep that the foul air brought on.

At sundown Swims lowered pails of rancid food, grudgingly replaced the slop buckets and the water pails and slammed the trap for the night. At some unmarked hour of blackness Whipple woke. His throat felt dry and there was a heavy, sour taste in his mouth. He got up, thankful that he was not shackled to anyone, and stepped over sleeping forms to the water bucket. The water was almost warm and seemed to have soaked up some of the reek of the cellar. He choked down a mouthful and blundered back to his place just below the barred window. Tom stirred. "Anything up, Whip?"

"Just after a ball of water," muttered Whipple. "Stale as hell. Hey!"

Tom raised himself on his elbow. "What you staring at?"

Whipple pointed to the window where, vaguely outlined against the night sky, the head and shoulders of a man appeared. Whipple leaned toward the opening. The man outside wore a broad hat and the muzzle of a rifle jutted past his shoulder. Whipple said, "Want a drink, Reb? Got some prime Secesh water."

The head moved closer to the window and a low voice said, "Tell Andrews that Mitchel's coming up the river. Main body's as far as Stevenson. Scouts are close to Bridgeport, 'bout twenty miles away." The head vanished.

Whipple's hands were trembling. Tom tugged at his knee. "What's up, Whip?"

Whipple turned from the window with a wild urge to shout the news to the sleeping men. He closed his mouth tightly and dropped to one knee. "Keep this quiet, Tom. Old Stars is heading upriver toward us," he whispered.

Tom's breath went in sharply. "Then we're good as out!"

"Keep your voice down. If it's a fizzle, it won't do any good to get the boys' hopes up." He crawled carefully to the spot where Andrews slept, felt through the dark and pressed his thumb slowly under Andrews's ear. The long body didn't stir but Andrews seemed to wake at the first touch. "What is it?" he whispered.

"It's Sheldon." He repeated the guard's message.

Andrews said, "Ah. I see," as though he had been expecting the news. "Did you tell the others?"

"Only Tom."

"Keep it quiet, then. You used your head well. I may tell you that that man was no guard. Thank you and good night."

Hours piled into days as April ebbed. Whipple and Tom could feel their strength slowly waning. They could see the effect of imprisonment on the others. Short, solid Perry Shadrack never lost his spontaneous wit, but Whipple noticed that his quips were delivered in an increasingly shaky voice. Mark Wood, the Englishman, while somehow contriving to look dapper through filth and starvation, developed an odd twitch which affected his left cheek and neck. And so with the others, Knight and Brown, Parrot and Bensinger, Reddick and Dorsey. The passage of each day was subtly etched on them. Andrews alone was buoyed up with inner reserves of strength. Calm and cheerful, he dominated the reeking cellar.

Tom and Whipple covertly watched each other for signs of cracking, but something kept them fairly close to normal.

Three days had passed since the news of that move. Whipple sat with his back to the wall. Tom's head had sagged over against his shoulder and he sat very still for fear of waking him. A nap of fifteen minutes or half an hour meant just that much oblivion from the stench of the cellar and the crushing sense of captivity.

He rubbed his palm across his cheeks and chin where his beard was sprouting full. He wondered if they'd have a chance to wash and shave before appearing before the court. It would make a big difference in the effect they made on their judges. He'd hate to have any girl see him in his present state. He felt a sudden pang. Penn Grainger! What a chucklehead he must have seemed in her eyes, fatuously pouring out military gossip while, as he supposed, she feigned polite interest!

He blinked upward as heavy blows sounded on the trap door. Andrews looked up expectantly, calling, "What do you want?"

Whipple started. The muffled answer was not in Swims's querulous whine, but in Franklin Greene's deep tones. He was shouting, "Listen down there. Swims is drunk, so shout all you want to. Got news for you. Your trial's set for April twenty-eighth."

"You're sure?" asked Andrews.

"Officer from Leadbetter was here and we heard him telling Swims. Good luck."

Andrews spread out his arms. "You heard that? Tomorrow's the twenty-eighth. Gather round and we'll go over and over your defense."

Men began shouting: "Means we'll be out of here tomorrow!" . . . "Hey! Maybe they'll let us walk to the courthouse!" . . . "Wait till I feel that little old sun hit me!" . . . "Fresh air! It'll be like diving into the Maumee, just letting that wind slosh over you!"

Tom muttered to Whipple, "There's a lot more than just getting out. We'll be up against a mess of Secesh officers playing they're judges."

"Makes mice start running up and down my back, just thinking of it."

The cellar was still dark, but a glow from the lower window showed that the outer world with its roofs and trees and steeples was touched with sunrise. The raiders crowded around one of the water buckets, using up their precious ration by dipping rags into it and scrubbing their faces. Whipple backed out of the group and handed a cloth to Tom. "Take this. It's a piece of my shirt and it'll hold together better than that clout you're using. I'm —" He straightened up, eyes staring. "God Almighty. What was that?"

Far off to the west, heavy echoes rumbled through the hills. The men about the bucket stood frozen, their heads slowly turning toward the sound. There was a second rumble, no louder but more compact, denser. The sound died, was repeated. Whipple swung toward the window and his voice cracked. "Tom! Hear that? There's only one battery in the Army of the Ohio that can fire a volley so it sounds like one gun. That's Kinnyard! Down the river!"

Men were shouting and dancing about the cellar, banging their shackles. They pushed to the window, crowded against the west wall, ears close to the damp boards. And each man saw sharp and clear his particular regiment and company and squad pressing toward the foul jail, sweeping along the winding reaches of the Tennessee. Whipple leaned against the wall with his eyes half closed.

Another volley. It had to be Kinnyard. Any gunner would recognize his touch. The echoes had broken into a continuous bubble of sound. Tom shouted, "Hear that? He's given 'em 'Fire at will'!"

Then over the din Swims's voice whined. "Everybody up! Hurry it! Everybody up!"

The trap was open and Swims's head showed in the opening. Unseen hands shoved the ladder down. Andrews clapped his hands and the men crowded about him. "This is the day, boys," said Andrews. "Answer up as you've been doing in our drills." He dropped his voice. "And watch me all the time. The town'll be upside down with Mitchel's advance and there may be people around who'll see to it that we don't have to get as far as the court. Friendly people. I'll know the signs and I'm ready to act. Come on, now." He grasped the rungs and began his slow climb, fetters clanking.

It was hard, getting up the ladder. Whipple's knees sagged and his hands slid off the rungs. Fresh air pouring down turned him dizzy and set his heart thumping.

Down below, Tom steadied the swaying Campbell and Reddick, helped them begin their climb. When he himself, last of the raiders, reached the upper floor, he sprawled forward and found difficulty in forcing himself upright.

Swims was yapping and fussing, but Tom could only blink at the weird shapes that stood uncertainly in the light, eyes watery and knees unsteady. That bearded, filthy hulk scratching mechanically at his ribs was the skilled engineer, Knight; the stooped, ragged beggar beside him was John Wollam, once the model soldier of the 33rd. Each man showed, in varying degrees, the ordeal of imprisonment. Andrews still stood out as though buoyed up by some calm, inner certainty.

Swims shouted, "All right, Cap! Reckon they're as much above ground as they'll ever be!"

The outer door opened and a squad of infantrymen with slung rifles clumped in. There were more troops waiting in the corridor. A fat, bearded private seized Tom's wrists, inspected his handcuffs. A sallow sergeant called, "Hey! We ain't got enough collars!"

A lieutenant snapped, "Then rack 'em on as far as they'll go."

Heavy, chained collars were clamped about Brown's neck, about Pittenger's, Parrot's, and on about the room, linking them in pairs.

Then the lieutenant barked, "No more collars. Line 'em up. Get 'em goin'."

Whipple tried to edge beside Tom but the guards shoved him next to Elisha Mason of the 21st. As the double line with its guards clanked on down the stairs, Whipple could see Tom helping Perry Shadrack, who was still staggering. At the head and alone, Andrews stepped on as though his carriage were waiting for him outside. Mason said out of the corner of his mouth, "If I was a judge and saw this gang, I'd adjourn the court and chuck the whole bunch into the dog pound."

Whipple nodded, soaking in the sun and fresh air. He was listening for fresh sounds from the west. Faint but unmistakable, four guns thudded in unison somewhere off beyond the high-piled hills of Tennessee. The prison gates swung open and Whipple muttered, "Steady, now. Watch Andrews. Stuff can bust for us at any time and we want to be ready to grab any chance."

He was through the gate and out onto the rutted surface of Lookout Street, which, with its low houses and flimsy stores, was dozing in a hush broken only by the crunch of feet and the distant mutter of artillery.

"Hey! There's someone in a hurry!" said Mason, as a mounted officer galloped out of a side street and raced toward the center of the town. Down an alley at the right, Whipple saw draggled, slovenly infantry moving at a double. He muttered to Mason, "Never saw Rebs slop along like that. Militia. Someone wants 'em somewhere damn quick."

The column swung down from Lookout Street, threaded along a steep lane. Whipple looked beyond the leading files. There was something vaguely familiar about the roofs that lay ahead. A deep gush of smoke welled up from the flat lands below and a bell clanged. Recognition struck Whipple and he pointed to the smoke. "Court be damned," he cried. "We're heading for the station! Forget about Mitchel. The Rebs'll snake us so far away from here that he'll think he's looking for us through the wrong end of one of his telescopes!"

The train rolled on and on, back over the twisting line where the *General*, the *Yonah*, the *New York*, and the *Texas* had raced.

The raiders, looking out, saw the spot where the *General* had been abandoned, the black hole of Tunnel Hill, fatal Kingston with the Rome train waiting on the branch track. It was the same old line and yet there was a difference. Troops guarded every bridge and culvert. New camps had sprung up about many of the stations. Centers like Dalton and Adairville and Kingston were armed camps from which men could be rushed to threatened points on the line. Here was tangible evidence of one result of the raid. An uglier one was manifest in the angry temper of the crowds at the stations who swarmed about the car in such numbers that guards had to be thrown about it.

Late in the evening the train halted by a smoke-stained building marked Madison, well to the east of Atlanta. The raiders were marched off to the county jail where the men stared about incredulously. There were two big rooms, clean, aboveground, and airy. The cots that lined the walls were covered with straw mattresses. Big Campbell clanked about the room, punching the mattresses and muttering, "This is wrong. This ain't for us. Something wrong here."

"Must be," said Whipple. "And here's someone to tell us so. Get ready to dive for the cellar."

A one-armed captain, who seemed to be shaking with fever, entered, a sergeant at his elbow. The room was silent as he raised his hand and began to speak wearily, dragging out each word and painfully linking it to the one that had gone before. "Gentlemen, I regret that my orders don't allow me to remove your irons, save those about your necks. You will have rations at once. If, within the limits of my orders, I can do anything for you, send word to me through the guard. I am Captain Charles Moulton. Be sure and ask for me by name. I shall leave similar word with the men in the other room."

Jake Parrot stared at the door that slammed behind the captain and the sergeant. "Well! I'll be God damned!"

Others nosed about the room exclaiming over the wide, barred windows, the solid floor, shaking the frames of the cots and ruffling up the straw. The ration appeared in big, clean bowls and the guards distributed tin plates and rusty knives and forks to be carefully collected afterwards. Whipple winked at Tom. "I'm going

to complain to that damn captain. No napkins. No finger bowls. What does he think we are?"

"Outrage," mumbled Tom as he sipped lukewarm water.

The guards were setting three buckets of water, a bowl of soft soap, and a stack of ragged, grimy towels inside the door. Whipple put down his plate and headed for the nearest bucket.

Later the room was filled with snores, groans, and uneasy turnings as the raiders fell asleep on the first beds that most of them had known since leaving the camps by Shelbyville. Around midnight, Whipple awoke and found white moonlight streaming across his face. Despite fatigue and the unaccustomed luxury of stretching out, he felt restless. His skin was sore and tingling and he knew that the lice he had brought down from Swims's had gathered recruits in the Madison jail. He rolled over and looked toward the window. Andrews was sitting on his cot, his face toward the bars. As Whipple's chains clinked, Andrews looked around. "Hard to sleep?" he asked.

Whipple slid his feet to the floor. "I'm awake as a hoot owl."

"Move over here, if you don't want to sleep. We can talk without waking the others. You know, this jail's a change, but there's a lot going on that I don't like. I don't like the move down here. I don't like your being in a civil jail when there's that prisoner-of-war camp two blocks away. It looks to me as though a very strong party wants to make an issue of you and is smashing down anyone who takes a more reasonable view."

"I didn't care much for those crowds on the way down," said Whipple.

Andrews's teeth showed in a smile. "They had their uses. A few of our well-wishers were clever enough to take advantage of the confusion and get close to the cars. At Dalton and at Kingston, I had word to be on the lookout for help here. Just the same, I'm worried about you boys."

"I don't see anything new to worry about," said Whipple. "They shot us down here to get us out of Mitchel's way. If he takes Chattanooga, we'll stay here or move farther on. If he doesn't, we'll probably get sent back to Swims's jail. I tell you this though, all the boys'd be glad if you'd stop worrying so much about them and do a little for yourself."

"I've nothing to worry about," said Andrews calmly. "I'm not a soldier. My mind doesn't work that way. What little I've done is the only possible contribution that I could make. For me, as an individual, that contribution is all that counts because the Union is all that counts. Mind you, I'm not an abolitionist — except in so far as slavery by itself threatens the Union. *Anything* that might split the states has got to go, whether it's big or little, abstract or concrete."

Whipple shredded a coarse straw between his fingers. "I ought to have figured it that way from the start. But I didn't."

"Traveled much?"

"A few trips with my father. They never lasted long. I've been east to Pittsburgh and New York. Once we went through Illinois and into Iowa."

"My people had always lived in Hancock County in western Virginia. We were slaveowners, of course. Things went wrong for my father when I was in my teens and he sold everything and went out to Missouri. I began to see things. For example, I'd say that there were nearly two hundred thousand Germans, new settlers, there. About a quarter of the population. They hadn't come to make money. Most of them had lost money by coming. The possibilities of the Union meant more to them than anything they'd had at home and home means a lot to a German. When the trouble broke here, most of them stood by the Union. I'd say that they saved that one state from seceding. Germans? They call themselves Americans. So do I."

"That's another thing I missed," said Whipple glumly. "We used to laugh at the Germans at home, make fun of the way they talked and the way they sang and the way they drank beer instead of whiskey. But today, there's hardly a regiment out of the Midwest states that isn't thick with them and I don't feel like laughing."

"Yes, seeing them and others like them teaches you a lot. In '60 I came back east and took up land that my family had owned in Kentucky. I was past thirty then, and I'd done pretty well but I brought east a lot more in my mind than I brought in drafts and notes. I settled in Flemingsburg and found that people were splitting up worse than I'd feared. I went to work. I told myself that nothing mattered except the Union. I've got nothing to worry

about so long as I follow that course." He rubbed his hands gently. "I'd like a little rest later. I'd like to see Flemingsburg again."

Whipple nodded absently. His mind was sorting out what Andrews had said and the selflessness of the man shook him as he recalled his own glib and facile triumphs.

Andrews talked on about Flemingsburg. It was a tiny place, but it was lovely, right on the edge of the bluegrass country and basking on the slope of a steep hill. If you climbed to the top of the courthouse opposite the little brick hotel you could see for miles and miles north and east and west. There was a mountain spur toward Virginia where thunderheads piled their threats. If you looked west toward Licking River and Cynthiana, you could see endless fields of bluegrass dip to the touch of the wind that sent cloud shadows racing across them.

And there were people he'd like to see again — old Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey who lived out the Maysville Pike. There were Lance Jackson and Joe Ashton. And the biggest reason of all for going back — "Her name's Elizabeth — Elizabeth Layton," Andrews said softly. "The Lindseys introduced us and as soon as I saw her I knew I'd ask her. We plan to be married on June seventeenth. There'll be roses everywhere and larkspur along the garden paths and orange lilies by the creeks. She's not very tall and she's got dark hair and eyes that look right through you. Just to see her, you'd know she was stanch Union."

"Sounds wonderful," said Whipple. There was no particular girl at home or anywhere else to whom his mind could turn as Andrews's turned. He had been strongly attracted to Penn Grainger but the very thought of her and how she must look on him sent uneasy qualms through him.

"After we're married we'll go on a trip to Washington," said Andrews. "The President wants to see me. He may have more work that I can do. He'll know best. And whatever I'm doing, Elizabeth will keep the place running and go on with the plans for our new house. We've drawn every detail — brick, with deep chimneys, galleries that'll take in the best views, solid barns." He laughed suddenly. "But we won't build them, talking the sun in like this. Better get to sleep, Whip. We've got to be on our toes here."

* * *

The days slipped by under Moulton's decent, humane rule. The men gained weight, began to lose the marks of their time with Swims. But there was an underlying tension. The outside reached into Andrews in mysterious ways and he communicated what he knew to the group. For some time the strange messages merely warned him and his men to be alert and ready. Then, in the first week of May, Whipple looked up from his cot to see a Confederate major, hot-eyed and grim, beckoning to Andrews, who left the cell under strong guard. An hour later he returned, saying merely that he had been questioned concerning the status of the raiders. But that night there was intense excitement outside the jail. Riders galloped up, galloped off again. Men shouted angrily in the corridors. Who had admitted that supposed major? Who was so plumb stupid as to be fooled by an obvious Yankee in a captured uniform? Yes, he'd got away clean and God help the man who was responsible!

Whipple crept to Andrews's cot. "Have a good talk with the major?"

"Shh!" whispered Andrews. "By midnight when the guards are lax, I'm going to rouse the boys. Our plans have come. We make our escape on May sixth. Every last detail's planned. We can't miss. Whip — we'll all be home very soon."

Whipple stretched out a hand. "Say, by June seventeenth?"

"Long before that. Word'll get to Elizabeth and she'll be waiting for me."

Through rain that swept down from cloud-masked hills, the hours of May sixth ebbed sullenly away. The raiders, huddled in a foul, leaky boxcar, watched the now familiar stations roll by with bone-deep despair. The telegraph must have brought news of the move along the line for there were jeering, hooting crowds at most of the stops.

Whipple sat hunched in a corner between Tom and Andrews. The prospect of a return to Swims's was bad enough. Worse was the knowledge that the careful plans for escape were hopelessly wrecked. Mitchel's sweep to Chattanooga had not been supported. Far from sending him troops, Buell and Halleck had even taken units from him and now only weak patrols rode the banks of the Tennessee.

It was murky dusk when the raiders, squelching through mud, saw the gate of Swims's palisade swing open and heard the jailer's high whicker. "Heh-heh-heh! So you boys . . ."

A tall, erect shape materialized and a voice cut through Swims's whine. "Where are you putting this party?"

Swims rubbed his hands. "Right down in the li'l ol' cellar!"

The officer spoke sharply. "You will *not* put them in the cellar. They will occupy the upper part of the jail. Have a fire started for them at once."

Swims protested, "Godamighty! These ain't nothin' but Yanks! If my cellar's good 'nough for runaway niggers, it's good enough —"

"You heard my orders, Swims. Get that fire started. These men are drenched." As Swims shambled away, the officer addressed the column. "I am Colonel Claiborne of the Confederate Army. So far as my orders permit, you are to be treated like soldiers. I can do nothing about your irons or your rations. I have, however, requested the civil authorities to urge that the townspeople supply you with food in addition to what you receive from Swims. Mr. Andrews, you will continue to be spokesman for your party, if that is agreeable to you. I shall call on you tomorrow morning to discuss your welfare."

He walked away into the darkness and the guards shepherded the party into the jail.

The room above the cellar was empty, save for the lone Negro, Lem. He crouched close by the fireplace where logs hissed to the touch of new flames. His eyes were expressionless, opaque, and he barely glanced at the shackled men who crowded into the room.

The fire burned brighter, threw out a warming glow. Whipple felt it soak into his sodden clothing and drew closer to it. "Better than the cellar, anyway," he muttered to Tom.

Pittenger held his torn coat to the fire. "I'm feeling a heap better. Look, we better start planning an escape right now!"

John Wollam grunted, "By shot, you're right!"

New animation crept over the party. There was the warmth of the fire and the greater warmth of hope on which to build. Andrews, standing well back from the hearth, nodded in approval as he caught the changed spirit.

Whipple, partly dry, moved back from the blaze to make way

for Mason. He found himself beside the dull-eyed Lem, who sat hunched with his arms about his knees. He studied him. He was a well-built man with a good head. His face was intelligent even under the mask of hopeless apathy. Whipple recalled the man's plight and touched his arm. "They still say your papers are no good?"

He nodded vaguely.

"That's damn tough. You've got about five months to go, haven't you?"

Lem shrugged dismally. "Don' know. Cain't figger who'll buy me when time's up."

He droned on, his voice as expressionless as his face. At regular intervals he was taken from the jail and flogged. It was about once a week, he thought.

Whipple cried, "God Almighty! Flogged once a week?"

You kind of got used to it, Lem said. Swims was allowed by law an additional fee for each flogging. Whoever wanted to buy him at the end of the year must pay for the board, lodging, and flogging. "Sound like big money to me," the Negro concluded. He huddled his knees closer. "Used to figger I was here for a year. Now it looks like I'm here from now on. Mebbe if Swims'd quit his floggin' —"

Whipple snapped, "Oh my God! Look here—if we get out, you get out with us."

"Ain't never heard of no one gittin' shet of Swims," said Lem.

Will Knight, the engineer, who had been sitting just beyond Whipple, turned suddenly. "No?" he said. "Well, look what I found on the floor of that damn boxcar. Hid it up my sleeve when the guard searched us." He made a quick motion and a long knife blade flashed in the firelight. A murmur ran over the group as heads craned closer. Knight went on, "We've got a tool at last. Now forget you've seen it until we find how's best to use it."

Silence fell over the room but heads were higher and eyes brighter and more assured.

As at Madison, a routine was developed with the help of Colonel Claiborne. For a solid hour each morning and afternoon Whipple and Tom found themselves in the yard with the others, luxuriating in the sun and wind, but heavily and efficiently guarded. Under the steep stairs which led down into the yard, the tiny window of the cellar leered at them and oozed its rank breath into the clean day

as though to remind them that, should Colonel Claiborne and his regulars be transferred, they would know its horrors once more. From the town, women sent soups, fresh bread, pies and preserves, donations that set Swims capering with rage and squalling to the colonel, "You feed 'em high and they'll git so fleshy they'll bust right out. How'd Kirby Smith like thet, huh? How'd Leadbetter like thet, huh?"

In the evenings they gathered about the cold hearth and sang, Ross's fine bass leading. Till midnight and even later they sang, sang until they were hoarse.

Do they miss me at home, do they miss me?
'T would be an assurance most dear.

They wailed mournfully:

Fly away to my native land, sweet dove, fly away to my native land.
And bear these lines to my lady love that I've traced with a trembling
hand.

The guards outside often joined in, called for favorites of their own. But the music threw Swims into a rage. To Whipple's delight he found that a song he had learned from the Germans of Turchin's brigade drove the whining man into a raging frenzy, and guards and prisoners alike droned out:

Und ve sit us aroundt mit der table,
Undt ve sprach von der oldt, oldt time,
Ven ve lift un dot house mit der gable,
Un der vine-covered banks von der Rhine.

But while the raiders sat in a tight circle, singing to the point of exhaustion, there were always three or four men lying with Andrews in the very heart of the group, planning, measuring, weighing, their words blanketed from hostile ears by the music.

The owner of a great house on Brabson's Hill, whose son was in a Northern prison, sent a ham to the raiders. When the last shred had been gnawed, Will Knight sat apart with the bone and his knife, which he handled with the delicacy of a surgeon. Whipple, helping Tom grease Lem's back to lessen the smart of the latest flogging, grinned at Knight.

Knight held a thick splinter of bone to the light, and returned to his whittling. Then he dropped his knife and caught Whipple's wrist. There was a snick and the right handcuff flew open. Whipple stared at it. Knight waved the bone key. "How do you like that? I was a locksmith before I hit the rails. Snap it shut now. We can open it any time we want—and all the others. The locks are standard."

"You're a damn genius," grunted Whipple. "Now we've got something really to plan with." He started as the stockade gate swung open and Colonel Claiborne walked into the yard. Out in the street the bayonets of a double line of infantry glittered. "Hells-a-fire!" muttered Tom. "Going to move us *again*?"

The colonel drew out a paper and spoke in a clear, carrying voice. "The following men will form a double line to my right. Sergeant Marion Ross; privates George Wilson, William Knight, W. W. Brown, William Pittenger, William Campbell, Samuel Slavens—" When he had called twelve names he stopped.

Andrews said, "What is this for, Colonel?"

"I don't know the reason, but these men are being transferred to Knoxville."

When the gates had closed on the twelve, Whipple sat down slowly. "My God, that finishes us," he said dully.

"How does it finish us?" asked Tom.

"He's taken most of the best and biggest men. And—Will Knight's got the only knife we're ever likely to get hold of."

Tom knelt beside him. "Don't worry about the knife. Will thought one of the guards was watching him so he gave me the knife this morning. It's up my sleeve. I've got the key, too. Come on, let's start thinking again."

Whipple straightened himself. "Right! There's a way out and we'll hit it!"

May died slowly in an uneasy hush that was broken only by splitting thunder. When the storms cleared, the sun burned through bright and hard, turning the exercise period into a blistering torment from which the remnant of the raiders straggled languidly into their ovenlike quarters. No word of the fate of the twelve drifted down from Knoxville. Colonel Claiborne was replaced by a fussy major,

amiable enough but nagged by his superiors. He cut short the recreation hours, forbade the townspeople to send in food, and kept summoning members of the group for irritating, footless questioning.

Returning from an hour-long siege, Whipple growled to Tom, "Maybe Claiborne thinks we're getting exchanged as prisoners of war, but this damned clabber-brain we've got now doesn't."

"I wouldn't worry about him, Whip. He's so thickheaded he wouldn't know which end of a mule to feed. What did he ask Andrews?"

"How'd I know? Andrews wasn't there."

"That's funny. The guard sent for him just after they took you out. Hey! Come to think of it, he's been out every day for the last three — no, four. Suppose maybe he's got someone working for us?" He turned quickly as the door swung open and Andrews entered. As the door slammed shut Tom called, "Just talking about you. Any news?"

Andrews smiled pleasantly. "Nothing unusual. General Leadbetter and some other officers wanted to question me further." He fanned himself with his hat. "I must say that I miss the boys who went up to Knoxville, but just the same, this room's a lot more comfortable with only twelve in it."

Whipple said, "Thirteen. Don't forget Lem." He nodded toward the hearth where the Negro crouched.

Dorsey yelled, "Who said thirteen? By chops, I don't like that. Hey, get Swims to move Lem down to the cellar. Thirteen, Jesus!"

"Lem's with us, Dave. I just meant twelve of the original crowd from Shelbyville, from the detail."

"That don't fix it. My gramp, he always said thirteen means one marked to get kilt. You got to have twelve, same's a jury or the Apostles or —"

"Or a firing squad," said Whipple dryly. "Shut up, Dave. If you don't like it, get down into the cellar yourself and then there'll be twelve. You can — oh hell, there's the door again."

A gaunt-faced captain stood just inside the sill. He spoke in a hoarse rasp. "James J. Andrews?"

Andrews stepped forward. The captain held out a large white envelope. "You are requested to read that in my presence."

Andrews broke the seal. The paper rustled as he read it, face unchanging and hand steady. Then he inclined his head. "Very good, Captain. I shall await your pleasure." He carefully replaced the paper in its envelope and thrust it in his inside pocket.

The captain stepped aside and guards brought in the sinister ladder, threw open the trap of the empty cellar. Andrews looked calmly at the little circle of his men about him. "Don't worry, boys. I shan't be far off. Now Captain, I presume you wish me to go first?" He went down the ladder with a slow, firm step. Two guards, heavily armed and carrying lengths of chain, followed him while the captain brought up the rear. There was a sound of metal slamming on metal below, a pause. The captain appeared at the top of the ladder, then the two guards. The trap crashed shut, was secured by a huge padlock.

Whipple burst out, "What's that for, Captain? I'm senior non-commissioned officer in charge here."

The captain looked at him with expressionless eyes. Then he said. "This is as good a time as any other," and drew out a paper. "Copy of what I gave him," he added. Then he began to read. Whipple strained forward as the rasping voice went on — "And the court do therefore sentence the accused, the said James J. Andrews (two thirds of the members concurring therein), to be hanged by the neck until he is dead. The sentence of the court will be carried into effect not later than the seventh of June." He stopped abruptly and stalked out of the room, followed by the guard.

Hanged! The word seemed to drift out from each man, to lie like a heavy cloud in the air. Whipple, his mouth dry, looked dazedly at the others. Andrews *knew* it. The captain had only brought confirmation. How could he have acted so calmly, almost serenely? How could he have said "Don't *you* worry" as he descended to his solitary confinement?

As though answering the mute question, Lem spoke slowly from the hearth. "He's got a kind of glory to him."

Whipple felt as though something had snapped within him, had left his brain burning but clear. Most of the others, too, seemed to be recovering from the shock. He caught Tom's chain, Porter's. "Come on. Get over here, far from the door as we can."

They formed a tight huddle against the windowless wall. Tom

said, "Listen. This fixes it. We've got to get him out and damn all risks. Anything goes."

"Good," said Whipple. "Just what I thought. He's fought for us right along and left himself out. That's over. No matter what happens to the rest of us, Jim Andrews goes free. And we've got a week at the most to work in."

Robertson said heavily, "Wait a minute. Maybe we can get *him* out. But if some of us get left behind — well, it won't make the courts go any easier on us."

Parrot snapped, "God damn you, Sam. He ain't never held back for us. You interfere with this and I'll twist my chains around your windpipe."

"Just wanted you to know, that's all," said Robertson sullenly. "I'll go far as you will. And as for your God-damn chains —"

"Quit scrapping," said Whipple. "Anyone who tries to hold back better not sleep nights or he won't wake up at all. I'm taking charge."

Lem edged slowly into the group. "Use me. Don't matter none what happens to me."

"Hear that?" said Tom. "Anyone feel like holding back now? Go on, Whip. Give us 'Action front!'"

P A R T I V

Penn Grainger

THERE was less volume to the nightly singing now and Marion Ross's resonant bass was badly missed. Nonetheless, nine men, roaring out the old songs, went far to cover the steady cautious noises of the three who worked, worked, worked until exhaustion forced their replacement by a fresh trio.

While one man listened for the warning step of the guard on the outside staircase, two more formed a human pyramid against the far wall. On their shoulders stood a third man who carved desperately with Knight's knife at the heavy planks that formed the ceiling. On the second night — the first of June — Tom balanced precariously on Whipple's and Lem's shoulders while from the floor below the others sang hoarsely:

'T was in a grove I met my love,
One soft and balmy night;
I owned my flame, she did the same
And trembled with delight —

It was killing work, bracing on the two pairs of shoulders and twisting his whole torso while his cramped arm forced the knife into the plank above. His muscles knotted and strained, sent waves of pain through shoulder and back. From time to time Whipple called softly, "Want to be spelled?" To be relieved would mean stretching out luxuriously on the floor, letting sinews and tendons slowly relax into normal positions. Tom only shook his head and drove the knife harder.

There was no end to the thick plank. He could carve at it for a lifetime, an eternity. Less than a week now, before the guards would come for Andrews. The plank — there was a cracking noise. A section sagged, struck him on the forehead. He seized it, pushed it back and through the gap. Then he caught the edge of the next plank,

hauled himself into the hot darkness of the space between roof and ceiling. He shuffled on cautiously, hands before him. If the brick walls were planked on the inside like the rooms below, it would mean more time wasted on hacking them clear. Tom gave a gasp of relief. There was rough mortar under his fingers, a stretch of brick that ran as far as he could feel.

He crept back to the gap. Below, he could just make out the white blur of faces turned up toward him. Despite their excitement at the completion of the first stage of their labors, his companions did not forget to sing on. Suddenly Whipple was close to the gap. "All right, Tom. Lem's holding me. What did you find?"

"All brick. Mortar's pretty crumbly and old."

"Great. Watch out. I'm coming up."

"The hell you are. You've got to get the others busy. Make them tear up their shirts. Pass Lem up here. He's done bricklaying."

"Let me up there. I'll — Christ! There's Mark Wood signaling. Down! Quick! Lem and I'll get you."

Tom slid his feet down to their shoulders, slipped the end of the plank into place, and dropped to the ground where he hurriedly clamped his fetters onto his wrists. The door swung open and the sergeant of the guard looked in, lantern held high. Tom clamped his jaws as though he feared that the sergeant would hear the pounding of his heart. The lantern dropped. "Jeez, you Yanks are the singin'est fellers I ever heerd. Most two o'clock. Say, how 'bout givin' us that Dutch one — you know — 'Gif glass uf goot lager du me'?"

Then he was gone, and Tom and Lem were in the loft fumbling at the wall in the breathless gloom. Tom jabbed with the knife. Lem said, "Easy, Mist' Madden. You goin' to tumble that brick right top a guard's head down there. You give me the knife."

Defly and silently Lem worked at the flaky mortar. Tom heard him give a low grunt of satisfaction. There was a scraping sound and a sudden gust of cooler air swept across Tom's face. Lem worked on, another brick was carefully detached, a third and a fourth, and Tom could make out the glimmer of the night sky, a spatter of stars. From below, the song drifted up:

Undt I saidt du mine fader be cheerie,
Du mine mutter not longer look sadt —

Lem thrust his head through the hole in the bricks, then turned to Tom. "Guard jes' went aroun' the corner. I'll rack out four-five more bricks. Some mighty big men got to git th'u here."

In the room below, Whipple stared up at the gap until his neck ached. He winced every time the faint clink of metal on brick reached his ears. It was too late now to sing without arousing suspicion and the least sound seemed to him enormously magnified. Tom's head showed in the gap. "Stand clear, Whip. Here she comes," he whispered.

Whipple held out his coat and the knife dropped into it without a sound. He passed the blade to Wood. "All right, Mark. Fast and quiet. Get going."

Wood knelt on the floor by the ten-foot rope of knotted shirts and gouged carefully about the padlock staples of the trap door that were sunk in the planking. The Englishman seemed slow, wickedly slow, and Whipple forced back an impulse to take the knife himself, to hack and slash boldly. He told himself angrily that Wood was the best man with tools in the party, that he himself would only botch things.

It took more than half an hour to free one leg of the staple, still longer for the other. Whipple felt his palms sweating. Time was running short, they were wasting precious darkness. At last Wood freed the iron prongs. Whipple wrenched the trap door open and whispered into the dark cellar below, "Ready?" Then he carefully lowered the crude rope, felt it tighten in his hands. Parrot, Robertson, Wood, and Dorsey hauled with him. The knots held firm. Andrews's head, his shoulders, finally his whole body, emerged and he stood, shackled, before them.

Whipple muttered, "Quick, now!" and unlocked the fetters at wrist and ankle. He turned, tossed the rope up through the gap in the ceiling where Tom and Lem caught it, let one end fall free. Whipple pushed Andrews. "You're first. Up you go."

Andrews said in a low voice, "Boys, you shouldn't have done this for me. You all ought to be across the river this instant. Why, you've —" His voice broke. He recovered himself, said, "You'll have to tell me what you want me to do, Whip."

"Grab that rope. You'll see the next step from the loft," said Whipple.

One by one the group swarmed up the rope until the whole party stood in the hot blackness of the loft. Whipple knelt and replaced the severed board. Then he faced the others. "All right. Our plan's worked — so far. I'm going down first. Then Tom, then Lem. John Wollam goes next. Mr. Andrews, you'll come right after him. The rest know their order. Let's go."

He peered cautiously through the gap in the bricks, then held up one hand. Directly below him, a distance of some fifteen feet, stood a sentry. He was a foot or so away from the wall where his musket rested. His hands were in his pockets and he whistled softly to himself. Whipple studied the man's posture, gauged the distance. He reached back, touched Tom and then Lem. He gathered himself slowly, swung his legs into space and dropped.

The night shot past him. He landed hard on the guard's neck. There was a dull, horrible snick. The guard went limp, sagged to the ground, his head bent at a ghastly angle. Whipple stepped clear of the body and listened. There was no sound save for the distant hoot of a locomotive. He seized the guard's musket, posted himself close by the corner of the building, and looked up.

The rope was now hanging from the gap above and Tom was slipping down it hand over hand. As soon as Tom struck the ground, Lem swung out. Tom nodded to Whipple and glided to the other corner of the building while Lem stood at the foot of the rope. Wollam slid down beside him. At their feet, the dead guard huddled grotesquely. The rope tightened again. Lem and Wollam steadied it as Andrews cleared the last few feet. Whipple made a quick gesture and ran toward the east face of the stockade, the others ahead of him. The trees and palings seemed quite distinct now, showing sharper against the sky that lightened ominously. The runners ahead of Whipple jumped, caught the top of the stockade, and swung themselves over. Whipple, hampered by his musket, had to leap twice before he secured a hold. As he straddled the top he looked back toward the jail. Dorsey was standing in the gap, ready to slide. Whipple swung his legs to the outside and looked back once more.

The whole scene had changed. Dorsey had vanished into the loft and two guards were running toward their dead comrade. One of them stopped short, raised his musket. There was a flash in the dark

and something shot past Whipple's face with the yowl of an angry cat. He dropped to the ground. His companions were already across Lookout Street with its scattered houses and heading east down a steep slope. Whipple overtook them. Still running, Tom panted, "What now, Whip?"

Whipple said, "Keep going! All of you! Listen to that!" From the prison, now well behind them, a high thin voice wailed, "Corporal of the guard. Post No. 2!" A bugle blared and hounds began to bay.

Andrews called, "The others! Where are they?"

"Get going," snapped Whipple. The vague light that flooded the lowlands that they were now crossing, and the baying of the hounds, gave a new edge to his alarm. There was a sudden splashing ahead, mingled with loud swearing. Wollam, in the lead, had fallen into a deep brook. Whipple cried, "Into it. Everyone! Keep going east!" and plunged in with the others. His musket kept catching in overhanging bushes. He realized that one weapon could be of no help against the pursuit and let it sink into a deep pool where the water rose to his waist.

Tom, floundering beside him, gasped, "How much farther? This will take forever."

Whipple peered ahead through the slowly melting gloom. "Hit for the other bank. All right, Lem? Give the others a hand."

Whipple scrambled out between Andrews and Wollam. Andrews said once more, "The others?"

"No time to wait. The guards'll be damn well mixed up at first but when they get started, they'll travel like hell. Also they've got the telegraph. Ha!" His breath went out sharply. Somewhere on the high ground down which they had raced, a bugle rang out, a horse neighed, and hounds wailed mournfully. "Some of them got started, anyway. Get into those trees ahead."

In the half-light the woods looked untouched, primeval. A whole company could be lost in them, Whipple thought. If only he had been able to get pepper to cover their scent from the hounds. The wilderness ended abruptly, began again on the other side of the railroad tracks which appeared so incongruously. Wollam waved, "Dive across. Into the other side!"

As he spoke a muted clatter came from the west. Less than a quarter of a mile away, squads of mounted men rode down the right-

of-way toward them. Whipple said, "Blocked!" in a flat voice. It was obvious that even one man, breaking for the other side, would be spotted at once by the oncoming cavalry. Far in the rear, in the direction of the high ground, voices sounded faintly and dogs clamored as though nosing out a scent.

Lem, his black face glinting with sweat, said, "Never heard of horse or hound climbin' trees."

Andrews said, "You've hit it, Lem."

"Only chance we've got," said Whipple. "Pick the trees, Lem, and give us a lead."

Lem dropped back into the edge of the woods, then beckoned. Two great oaks grew quite close together, their branches rising almost ladderlike. "Best bust up," muttered Lem. "Two to this one, three to that."

It was a mad scramble to reach the lowest branches. From the next tree they could hear Andrews and Wollam rustling. Thirty feet above the ground, Lem stopped where thick boughs branched out like a leafy platform. "This good," he panted. "Only don't drop nothin'."

Whipple looked down through the screening leaves. About him and below, branch and trunk glowed golden to the touch of the sun. "Just in time," he said, resting his back against the main trunk. "It's—by God, they've met!"

Through the rustle of leaves came the stamp of hoofs, a toss of angry voices. He could see a hound or two, horses milling slowly, knots of men on foot waving their arms. More men and dogs came from the east along the tracks. Then men, hounds, and horses scattered, wove off through the trees or along the tracks.

Tom said shakily, "Not a damn one looked up."

"Leaves mighty thick," said Lem. "White folks ain't smart trackers. My people know that."

"They're good enough to keep us hopping," said Tom. "Say, Whip, what about the rest of the crowd?"

"They're all right as long as they remember what we agreed on. They clamp their handcuffs back on and swear we left them in the lurch. Hey! Quiet. More people coming down the track."

Through the long, hot hours, the three sat perched high in the sun. Other search parties thrashed through the woods or clanked on

down the tracks. About noon, a train rolled west, filling the oak with wood smoke and cinders. The sun beat down fiercely and the torment of thirst was added to the increasing pain of cramped positions.

When the woods began to fill with soft gloom, Lem said, "Hi! Can hear Mist' Andrews and Mist' Wollam gittin' down."

"Damn!" said Whipple. "It's still too light. Never mind. We've got to stick together."

Scrambling down in the wavering light was a crackling terror to Whipple. Limbs seemed to swell under his hands, to rip out of his grasp. Once his foot skidded and he hung agonizingly in space. When he finally reached the ground his knees buckled and he had to lean against a tree until his head cleared. Andrews was saying, "We must be close to the river below Chattanooga Island. I know of a very reliable man on this bank. We'd best get to him as soon as we can. I think the river's about over there."

Lem shook himself. "Closer'n that. I kin smell it good. You follow me quick and close. I ain't aimin' to listen to no more houn's to-night. Come on."

Suddenly there was damp air on Whipple's face and he looked out onto the dull glitter of the Tennessee where it gathered itself for its great swing past Chattanooga and on to Moccasin Point. Lem muttered, "Here's what we want," and flung himself onto the ground where a spring purred up out of the bank to tumble into the great river. Whipple and the others sprawled beside him, soaking up the cold, clear water, letting it flood over drought-furred tongues and throats that crackled with dryness.

Andrews was on his feet first, wiping his beard. "There! Now we'll hunt that house I spoke of. I haven't had a chance to thank you boys for what you've done for me."

"That'll keep," said Whipple. "What we want now is cover, food, and a chance to fix the next move. Know which way the house is?"

Andrews studied the sheen of the dark river. "H'm — there's the Island, off left. We're — yes — we must go right. Lem, you've got the best eyes. It's on an old Indian mound close by the bank."

"I'll find it," grunted Lem and started off, the others trailing after him.

The house stood out, vague against the night sky. A dull glow of

light showed under a low porch. Andrews went up the steps and knocked. A deep voice called, "Who's there this time of night?"

Andrews answered, "The right sort of people."

The door swung open and a tall, bearded man limped into sight. "The right sort? Who am I?"

"You're Gavin McGavin. I am James Andrews."

Whipple heard a gasp of surprise. "Great day! I was told they had you roped and ironed to Swims's. Come in."

Andrews entered. Whipple pushed Tom ahead of him, Wollam and Lem bringing up the rear. The room seemed part kitchen, part living quarters, part storage space. It held little furniture but was clean and cool. McGavin moved a lamp on the bare table and squinted at Andrews. "Uh-huh! You're him all right."

Andrews took off his hat and sat down. "These boys got me out early this morning, Mr. McGavin."

McGavin surveyed the group with slow, ruminant eyes. "Then you want supper, I reckon."

Wollam licked his lips. "And dinner and breakfast, all at once."

McGavin set out a great slab of corned beef, bread, butter, and pitchers of milk. "Set to." Whipple filled a mug with milk, shoved a plate of meat and bread toward Tom. The milk was rich and cold and smooth. He sipped slowly, feeling suddenly weak and shaken. Andrews ate calmly and unhurriedly. Lem had taken his plate and mug and was sitting on a box close by the door, one shoulder turned to the others, his eyes on the outer darkness.

McGavin, cutting more meat, said, "The right sort of people get word to you at Swims's?"

Andrews shook his head. "No word at all since we left Madison."

"Not surprised. It's getting hard since you riled folks with that damned locomotive."

Whipple felt his eyelids growing heavier and heavier. McGavin's bearded face blurred in the lamplight. Andrews said, "You'll be able to pass us along from here?"

"I'll try. What I got to do's find a pilot and then pass you on to the right sort of people."

Whipple roused himself. "What do you mean by 'right sort of people'?"

McGavin looked surprised. "You don't know? Why, son, you

ought to guess. There's only one right sort and that's the kind that sticks to the old flag. A pilot's him that knows where they are. I'll drop down river and see if I can mouse out a brace. You see, you'll have to bust up." Whipple made a protesting gesture. "Sure you will. Five got out and five they'll look for. I'd say one by one, only it'd mean too many pilots."

"You're right," said Andrews.

"Sure," agreed McGavin equably. "Before you start out, fix up who goes with who. And do it right away. You'll start tonight. I know you're tired but you'd feel a hell of a lot more so with your feet kicking the air and a length of hemp round your neck. Draw straws, now, and I'll snuff the lights and lock you in."

It was past midnight when McGavin limped back into the house on the mound, two tall men close at his heels. "Won't need a lamp," said McGavin.

Andrews spoke from the hearth. "We're obliged to you for your help, Mr. McGavin. Wollam and I go in one group, Sheldon, Madden, and Lem in the other. Everything quiet outside?"

"Quiet's a dead mule. You're in luck. It's weathering up and there's a smart dusting of fog on the river. This is Joe Maulsby. He'll take you and Wollam, Mr. Andrews. Here's Ben Tincup for the others. Ben's pa's Cherokee and his ma's part. Better get stirring."

"Ready?" asked Andrews, moving toward the door.

Whipple touched Tom and Lem in the darkness. "Come on. Last lap of the race."

Andrews's hand fell on his shoulder. "No more worries, Whip. Just keep going." He hesitated. "Ah — there's not much that I can say to you boys. I'll never live long enough to repay what you've done."

Whipple said, "You get on up to Flemingsburg by June seventeenth. Get started on that new house."

Andrews laughed softly. "Trust me. But we'll meet first at Mitchel's headquarters, wherever they are. Good luck, Whip. And to you, Tom and Lem. And Whip —" he lowered his voice — "take good care of Lem. He won't have a pleasant time if he's nabbed. Now off with you."

The trio followed Ben Tincup to the porch and onto the gravel

walk. Whipple looked back over his shoulder. Andrews was standing in the doorway watching them. His head was back in the old assured pose and his right arm was raised as though in benediction. "Look at him — like a prophet out the Book," muttered Lem.

Whipple thought of Lem's comment at the jail — "He got a kind of glory to him."

The way lay upstream toward the mouth of South Chickamauga Creek. Tincup, in the lead, seemed to float and waver along through silvery mist. Behind Whipple, Tom swung along easily with Lem a vague blur in the night behind him. Just short of the creek mouth, the Cherokee gave a low, musical cry and a man rose from the bushes that edged the river flats. "My brother," said Tincup. "Canoe." There was a sharp ripple of water and the brother swung a canoe close to the bank. Tincup motioned to it. "Get in. I paddle."

Tom and Whipple balanced cautiously in the frail craft. Lem glided to the bow. "Two's better than one. Where's another paddle?"

"Can you use it?" asked Tincup.

"Watch," said Lem, picking up a blade from the bottom. Tincup pushed off as his brother vanished into the mist. The canoe shot out straight and true.

Whipple crouched low, watching the dark blur of the north bank loom heavier and heavier through the mist. The bow grated on sand and Lem sprang out, steadying the canoe. Whipple crept to the bow, stepped onto marshy land, Tom close behind him.

"What we do now?" asked Lem.

"Stamp her down," said Tincup. He gave a sudden leap on the bottom. Bark ripped and Tincup gained the bank in one leap. Whipple saw the canoe spin out into the current, lift its bow to the mists, and vanish in a dark swirl.

Tincup headed at a brisk pace toward higher ground that showed vaguely to the north and northwest. As he walked he kept making a nervous, clicking noise with his tongue, as though marking each alternate step. Lem swung on close behind him. Whipple and Tom struggled in the rear.

The Cherokee allowed no halts and when the others suggested a rest only pointed silently to the east. There were brooks and narrow creeks to cross, steep, tree-shrouded escarpments to scale. Tincup went steadily on through mist and darkness, never hesitating.

At the end of two hours the little party was skirting the tongues of land that ran down from the great Walden Ridge to the Tennessee. Chattanooga was far to the left rear and from the dark river below them rose a steady menacing roar. The trail grew narrower and Whipple moved cautiously as he looked down and down to the silver whirl of waters shooting on through iron-hard walls of rock that curved fantastically. Whipple shivered. "God, Tom, this is a bad place. I want to get out of it."

"Gives me the creeps," said Tom.

Just ahead, Tincup had slackened his pace, dropping back a little as though seeking reassurance in human company. "Keep going," urged Whipple. He touched the Cherokee's shoulder, found that he was shivering violently. "Bad place," he said. "Bad spirits. The Nunnehi live down there, clear on the bottom. Got their towns, houses, fields. Nights like this, you can hear 'em wailing. Don't do to listen. My people know." He spoke with a catch in his breath, as he scuttled up a path that led inland from the river trail. When Whipple and the others caught up with him he had shaken the spell of superstition from him and was stepping out briskly.

They slept through the daylight hours in a deserted cabin close to Shelton Gap. Two thousand feet below spread the great valley of the Sequatchie. When Whipple woke, Tincup was squatting by a small fire, frying bacon and baking corn bread.

"Get up and eat," he said.

Whipple roused Tom and Lem. The three ate ravenously while the Cherokee watched the fading crimson beyond the ramparts of the west, studied the winding river and its valley, already blued by night and the mists that rose in slow spirals from the marshy flats. Tom asked, "How do we travel now?"

"Hard," said Tincup. "We go north and west."

"North and west?" cried Tom. "The hell we do. We want the Alabama line and Mitchel's outfit. They'll be *south* and west."

"North," said the Cherokee. "Orders."

"Where'd you get orders way up here?" asked Whipple incredulously.

"Same place I got grub. From the right sort of people."

"Do we meet Andrews tonight?"

"Didn't hear."

Whipple turned to Tom, who was chewing a long spear of grass. "What do you think, Tom? I don't like the switch north."

Tom frowned. "Don't either. Still, Ben's been right so far."

Whipple turned to Lem, who stood a little apart. "How about you?"

"He talks true to me," said Lem.

Whipple threw a stone through the cabin door. "I don't know. It's — oh, hell, all right. Let's go."

Twenty hard miles and more were packed into the hours between sunset and sunrise, miles that took the party across the great valley and onto the high tableland of the Cumberland Plateau and through a wooded crest of Broad Mountain, not far south of the town of Altamont. At sunrise Tincup suddenly motioned the others into some bushes by a mountain path and went on alone, shoulders hunched and feet dragging toward the sound of hoofs.

Tom whispered, "What's he found now?"

Whipple started up. "All right. He's beckoning to us. Come on."

A stout, bald-headed man rode slowly toward them, fanning himself with his hat. Tincup strode by the off stirrup. The rider reined in. "Happy to meet you gentlemen," he said in a wheezy voice. "I'm Colonel John Osborne. Mexican War. Most happy indeed to see you safe. I had word you might be expected. Honored. Daring feat of yours. Most daring! Pity Mr. Andrews is not with you. Privilege to serve him. Serve all of you. Your names, please?"

Whipple, after a glance at Tincup, who gave a brief nod, identified himself and Tom, adding, "And Lem has been with us right through."

"Been with the right sort of people, eh? A good fellow, I've no doubt. Now as to your accommodations. Unfortunately — most unfortunately — all my family do not think as I do so I can't actually bring you under my roof. A pity. And my blacks had best not see Lem. Ben, you take them through the woods to the old barn where you brought the last ones. Keep quite out of sight. I'll see that food and other things are sent you. No! No! Don't thank me. Honored!" He wheeled his horse about and cantered jouncily away.

The old barn was littered with broken-down wagons and farm vehicles and the loft where the party sheltered was stuffed with dusty hay. Whipple edged to a wide crack in the wall and looked out. A

hundred yards away the main house perched high, its warm brick walls accentuated by the deep shadows of its pillared galleries. It faced east over a great sweep of morning-touched country where distant blue hills shimmered.

He watched a little girl in wide bright skirts walking up and down by the side of the house, a bandanna'd Negress holding a parasol over her. "God — look at that. What a God-damn fool thing war is. If someone wanted to hold this ridge and someone else wanted to blow him off they'd pound the hell out of that house with Parrotts and Napoleons. I tell you, things don't look too bad just now. We've got New Orleans. Tincup says Beauregard's given up Corinth and that was *the* big base, down the railroad from Huntsville. And Colonel Osborne told Tincup McClellan's almost into Richmond."

Tom wriggled in the dusty hay. "Makes me want to get back to the battery. What's the idea, sending us up this way toward central Tennessee?"

"Don't know. Ben doesn't either. Word's been passed along, though."

After sundown the next day, Whipple and the others dropped down the ladder to the floor of the barn. Tincup waited by the wide door. "Heard from Andrews?" asked Tom.

"Heard nothing."

"Where do we go tonight?" asked Whipple.

"Not a far piece."

"What do we do when we get there?"

"We wait," said Tincup. "Let's go."

The night's journey bore more to the west, following an old Cherokee trail that wound along the flanks of low ridges, dropped to bottom lands, rose again to higher ground. At the end of two hours, Tincup broke away from the old trail and headed across a wide, grassy stretch where a big house showed against the sky.

The pilot kept on across fields, over a thick-turfed lawn, where flower beds around the big house were sweet in the night. Tincup walked boldly onto a wide porch and swung a heavy knocker. The others waited at the foot of the steps. The door opened and Tincup went swiftly in. The door closed. Tom whispered, "Never been like this before."

"Ben's been right so far," said Whipple. Inwardly, he was dis-

turbed. He could hear footsteps inside the house, could make out Tincup's shadow against a frosted pane set in the door. In a huddle of buildings off to the right, a Negro sang:

An' we'll take a social walk to a far an' distant land,
Where the Hawk shot the Buzzard an' the Buzzard shot the Crow.
We'll rally in the canebrake and shoot the Buffalo.

The door opened again and Tincup, standing in the light, beckoned. The three went up the steps, Lem stopping on the threshold while Whipple and Tom entered uncertainly, looking incredulously at the graceful carved furniture in the wide hall, at the bright mirrors and fine carpeting. Tincup jerked his elbow at a door to the left. "You first," said Tom. The Cherokee looked at him indifferently and entered the room. Whipple stepped in after him. It was a long, high-ceilinged room, dimly lit. From the far end a girl gave a low cry of surprise. Whipple started, looked closer. Then he seized Tincup from behind, locked an arm under his chin. He shouted, "Tom! Lem! Run for it! We're sold! Run, I say."

Tincup didn't struggle. He only braced himself against the sudden attack. Whipple tried to wrestle him off his feet, glaring angrily down the room as Penn Grainger came slowly toward him.

Whipple shouted again, "Run for it!"

Penn stopped by a table where a derringer lay ugly in the lamp-light. She said quickly, "Let Ben go. This is where you were meant to come."

Panting, Whipple released his hold and Tincup moved to Penn's side. Whipple said coldly, "Meant to come here—by whom?"

"By the right sort of people," said Penn.

"Our ideas of the right sort don't agree." Whipple's eyes took in the room, the position of the derringer, of Penn and the Cherokee.

"So I used to think. But lately I've been hearing about you, Mr. Sheldon," said Penn quietly.

He looked down at her, at the play of light on her soft brown hair, at her steady gray eyes and serious, pretty face. Her last words hung in his mind again and he said harshly, "You couldn't hear a thing to make you think I'd go against the Union."

"Not at all. I think we're on the same side now. When I first met you, you were on no side but your own."

He managed a tight smile. "You want me to send you a plan of our lines when I get back?"

Her soft mouth set. Then she picked up the derringer and held it out to Whipple, butt first. "Does this convince you?" she asked.

Whipple took the pistol, looked at it and then at her. Her eyes met his steadily. He said, "It's hard, remembering the way you used me."

"You have the pistol," said Penn. "No one can stop you if you want to go."

He turned the weapon over in his hand, then laid it on the table.

From the doorway Tom cried, "Good!"

Whipple looked around in surprise. Tom was just inside the door and Lem was on the porch. Neither had run at his warning. Penn smiled at Tom. "Mr. Sheldon had grounds for doubt." She turned to Whipple. "I had to do what I did. I had to make everyone, even my own kin, think I was Secession. What you told me, and a lot more, I sent on to people in East Tennessee, Unionists who had a right to know. They have to know what they can count on. It was important to know that General Mitchel had moved troops west to Tuscumbia. That meant that those troops would not be marching on Knoxville. They had to know what sort of troops were around Shelbyville. If they were green and weak and badly led, that would mean that East Tennessee couldn't count on them. Really, there was no other way to send word. Kirby Smith has a very tight grip on the country."

Whipple said somberly, "You could have told me what you were doing."

She looked steadily at him. "Could I — then?"

He turned away. "All right. What do you want us to do now?"

Penn said, "The message spoke of three men, Ben. Where's the third?"

"Porch," said Tincup.

Penn made out the figure beyond Tom. "You'd better come right in," she said. "What's your name?"

Lem came as far as the door. "Name's Lem, miss. I'll be fine right here."

Penn sank onto a small divan. "Then the rest of you pull up chairs." She smiled at Tom. "I just had word of a pilot and three

people. I wasn't told who. You must be Tom Madden. I've heard of you before." She folded her hands in her lap. "Where is Mr. Andrews?"

Whipple said sharply, "You don't know?"

She shook her brown curls. "Only that he and some others got away from Swims's jail."

Tom rubbed his head. "We were hoping to find out about him. We got out on the morning of the second. This is the fifth, isn't it?"

Penn's eyes widened. "And you've heard nothing since?"

"Don't mind saying I'm worried," said Whipple.

Penn pinched her lower lip gently. "When did you see him last?"

"Early morning of the third," said Tom. "We split at McGavin's."

Penn frowned. "Did you know Mr. Andrews's pilot, Ben?"

"Pilot was all right," said Tincup.

Penn leaned back on the divan. "He's probably well on his way," she said. "As to hearing from him, that might be hard now. Troops are moving down from Knoxville to support Leadbetter."

"At Chattanooga?" asked Whipple. "Why on earth?"

"Mitchel sent out Negley's brigade and Sill's. They seem to be converging on Jasper."

"That's close to Chattanooga," said Tom quickly. "We ought to go right down and join them."

"What for?" asked Penn.

"Tom's right," said Whipple. "Negley and Sill'll be too weak to *hold* Chattanooga, but they can take it long enough to get the rest of the boys out of jail."

"That's it," said Tom. "We could act as guides."

From the doorway, Lem spoke slowly. "I know Chattanooga fine. Reckon I could help."

Penn looked curiously at Whipple. "If you got caught again, you know that Leadbetter would be very glad indeed to see you."

"We've got to take that chance. Those boys have got to get out. And the same for those at Knoxville." He got up. "Better start right away."

Penn held up a slim finger. "Not until I hear what roads are cleared for you. And there's another thing. When Mitchel moved against Chattanooga, you were shipped deep into Georgia. That could happen now to the others. As for Knoxville, your friends are pretty well off so far as comfort goes."

Tom pushed back his curly hair. "How can you know that?" he asked.

"I have a very dear friend there — a Mrs. Mabry."

Whipple looked sharply at her. Mrs. Mabry? Suspicion crept back into his mind. As though reading his thoughts, Penn went on, "You've heard me speak of her. Her work is hard because her husband is a Rebel colonel. Just now she's arranging for some escaped Union prisoners to be guided through the mountains into Union territory."

Tom stared at her. It was fantastic to be in this pleasant room where two ragged whites, a Negro, and a Cherokee listened to a remarkably pretty girl as she spoke calmly of a friend, wife of an enemy colonel, who was saving Union prisoners. He became uncomfortably aware of his matted hair, unshaven face, and blackened hands.

Tincup glided from his chair and stood with one ear to the curtained window. Penn's eyes demanded silence. Tincup turned away. "Hoot owl. Three times," he said.

Penn's serious face brightened. "So soon?" She looked at Whipple. "Would you like to go with Ben and meet whoever's come?" She pushed the pistol toward him.

Whipple got up. "I'll go. Keep the gun. If that's the wrong kind of owl, you may need it."

It seemed to Whipple, as he followed Ben through the dark, that Penn's suggestion was almost a challenge. It was probably all right, but if there were a trap involved, he was sure that he could handle the pilot. Besides, he had the whole wide night to hide in, and back in the house Tom and Lem would be alert with the pistol within easy reach.

By an alder clump Tincup hooted, was answered. A horse whinnied softly. The pilot called low, "Come on."

Two figures, one tall and the other quite short, emerged from the gloom. The tall one said, "Who's that with you?"

"The right sort," answered Tincup.

There was a smell of hot metal as the stranger turned on a dark lantern. Whipple blinked in the glare. The second stranger gave a gasp and then ran forward. "Whip! Whip! It's you! You're safe!" Small hands clutched at his sleeves and he saw the white blur of a face turned to him as the lantern was masked again.

Whipple said quickly, "Sharon! My God, what are you doing here? Why didn't Mitchel send you north? Do you know what you're doing?"

"Of course I do. I'm working with Mrs. Grainger. General Mitchel sent me to her when I first got back."

"What's she doing so far from Shelbyville?"

"Watching for people like you. It's really one of Mrs. Mabry's houses, but she's in Knoxville most of the time."

Whipple drew a deep breath. Sharon's complete acceptance of Penn drove away the last possible shred of doubt. She had lived too long in strife-torn territory to be duped. He said, "Let's get up to the house."

Sharon glided along beside him, her arm through his. "Oh, Whip! I'm so glad you're safe. It was awful, what you did at the river."

"I knew I'd be all right," said Whipple.

"You couldn't have known you'd be all right. Whip, aren't you glad to see me?"

"Sure. Of course." He brushed at the thin riding cloak that she wore. "Time someone looked after you. Have you been riding all over the map wearing that spider web? You'll get cold."

"I've been perfectly warm. But I've got a heavier one strapped to my saddle. Do you think I better wear it?"

"We'll see," said Whipple. "Have you heard about Mr. Andrews?"

"He's right up at the house, isn't he?"

Whipple felt a stab of disappointment. "No. I hoped you might know something about him."

Sharon looked up at him. "But everyone thinks he's with you. He must be all right, though. He's probably waiting somewhere until the last of the Knoxville troops move south."

As they entered the house, Tom sprang to his feet with a muffled exclamation. He stared as Sharon tossed back the hood of her cape with a graceful gesture that showed a mass of deep brown hair. She had dark eyes and lashes and the red of her lips was vivid. Under the cape was a habit of blue linen, scarlet piped, and on one of her little boots a single spur winked.

Penn ran to the girl and kissed her. "Sharon dear, how nice that you're early. Did you have any trouble getting up from Huntsville?"

Sharon slipped out of her cape. "Some cavalry stopped us at a ford

but Joe Reese talked to them. He's outside with Ben Tincup now."

Penn smiled at her. "I'm glad it was easy. This is Tom Madden and I'm sure he doesn't have to be told who Sharon McDaniel is. Let's all sit down. Now, Sharon, what have you got for me?"

Tom tried to mask his wonder as the girls talked on. Sharon McDaniel! The one Whip had taken over Lookout Mountain. He hadn't said she was pretty as this, prettier even than Penn. It couldn't be. Fatigue and strain were playing tricks on him. Or, if she were that pretty, then she couldn't be saying what she seemed to say. Yes, General Mitchel was most anxious to see Mr. Andrews, but that would have to wait. In the meantime he wanted an exact report on the units left in Knoxville. Then Mrs. Mabry and Judge Temple would have to be told that since Beauregard had evacuated Corinth, Halleck was breaking up his army and scattering it. "In little dibs and dabbles," said Sharon, making a fluttering motion with her hands. "Grant's here and Sherman's there and Buell's somewhere else."

Penn said thoughtfully, "That looks as though nothing's to be done for East Tennessee yet."

"No," said Sharon, letting her hands fall limp in her lap. Tom began to feel concern as well as wonder while he watched her. Her face lit up, became animated, when she looked at Penn or Whip. Then, like a curtain, a dull detachment would fall over her whole manner as though she felt herself cut off, adrift and uprooted. It showed itself in the veiling of her eyes, in the deadening of her tone and the sagging of shoulders.

Penn rose gracefully. "I think you men better hide in the barn until Mr. Andrews comes or we have word of him. We've such a net across the state that he's bound to strike it sooner or later. Now you'll all want supper. I've sent the servants to bed but we'll go out and forage."

It was past midnight and Whipple, Tom, and Lem had gone to the barn. In a little room on the second floor of the house, Sharon stood in a shallow tub, pouring hot water over her small, pointed breasts and slim hips. Penn called through the half-open door, "You really think you'd better wait until we know about Mr. Andrews?"

Sharon stepped daintily from the tub and reached for a fuzzy

towel. "That's what General Mitchel wants. I'm to come back with him or definite word of him."

Paper rustled as Penn folded a letter. "I hoped you'd be able to go on to Nashville. There's news for Colonel Truesdail, Buell's Chief of Police. You ought to meet him anyway. If you could only start tomorrow you could take Mrs. Church's little niece with you. She'd be a fine passport for you if you met Rebel patrols. Her father's a major with them."

Sharon slipped into a flowered dressing gown and stepped into the room where Penn sat at a little mahogany desk.

She dropped into a chintz-covered chair by the desk. "I hate it," she said suddenly. "Staying in people's houses and trying to learn what I can that'll hurt what they believe in. Using their carriages to drive past their troops, counting their guns, seeing how their wagons are loaded." She sat forward, resting her chin in her hand.

"It has to be done," said Penn quietly. "You manage to carry a lot in your head and it's always right. Like your report which told Mitchel that Adams was moving."

Sharon's lips curled. "And I got word to him by riding through Adams's lines hunting for a doctor to look at my hostess's sick baby. They'd never have let me through without that story."

"But the doctor did come and the baby got well, Sharon."

"That was incidental. The figures for Mitchel were more important than the baby, it seemed." She set her teeth. "Never mind. I'll keep on."

Penn patted her hand. "I know, dear. And if things seem hard to us we've only got to look at —" she hesitated — "well, at things such as our callers tonight have been through. Or what James Andrews faces."

Sharon sat up quickly. "Yes. I know. And Penn—I *was* right about Whipple, wasn't I? Say you were wrong!"

Penn drew the plume of her quill lightly between her lips. "No. I wasn't wrong before. And when you first came to me and told me about him, I thought you were just overwhelmed with gratitude. But something's changed him. Perhaps it was the danger, perhaps seeing people take fearful risks knowing that they would gain nothing from the taking."

Sharon frowned. "I don't think you ever understood him at all,

Penn. The instant he saw I was in trouble he began looking after me. At the end he knew that only one of us could possibly reach that boat and he made sure that I did."

"I understood him all right," said Penn. "But I admit the change even if I can't explain it. As to looking after you, I doubt if he'd have done that in the old days—at least not that way. I can imagine Tom Madden acting that way, though."

"He's very nice," said Sharon quickly. "Really, Penn, I can't tell you all the things Whip did and there wasn't anyone around to applaud, as you seem to think is necessary."

"Except himself," said Penn. "Now you'd better run along to bed. We can't tell when you'll have to start out again."

Sharon went lightly out of the room.

Penn leaned her elbows on the sill and looked out into the night. Sharon was a real friend, she felt. In other times there would have been talk between them of dances and beaux and picnics, of novels and new bonnets and dresses. She was little older than Sharon and yet she felt mature and protective toward her. And how lucky Sharon was to have fallen in with Whipple Sheldon in his present state.

Whipple had changed. There was no doubt of that. There was Sharon's story of her days with him. But the change was deeper. When he had first seen her in the drawing room, he had grappled Tincup at once, telling the others to save themselves. The old Whipple would have seen to his own safety at once and then tried some quick, glib twist that would get the others out of danger. During the talk at supper, he had consistently spoken in praise of others and rarely mentioned himself. Yet his self-confidence had not shrunk. Rather, swagger and strut had been peeled away. There were other changes, too, she thought. He seemed less aware of her as a girl. There was none of the old half-serious, half-bantering challenge in his voice. She left the window abruptly, blew out the candle and slipped off her robe, letting the night wind blow gently over her body for a moment. As she reached for her nightgown she thought, "He needn't have changed *that* much!"

The barn beyond the house was small and hot. Tom, Whipple, and Lem lay in scratchy hay. Twice a day Tincup brought them food.

Through daylight hours they slept or watched at the innumerable knotholes of the walls. In cooler hours they caught glimpses of Penn and Sharon strolling under bright parasols. Whipple watched Penn eagerly. His whole concept of her had changed since the days along Duck River. She was still desirable as ever, feminine and unconsciously provocative, but as he saw her now in her true colors he felt something approaching reverence. What a girl!

By his elbow, Tom muttered, "Why didn't you tell me Sharon was pretty as that, Whip?"

"Sharon? She's a good little soldier all right," said Whipple, smiling. He was sure that that flip of Penn's white hand toward the barn was really a greeting to anyone who might be looking out.

On the morning of the second day, Confederate cavalry rode into the yard and Whipple saw the commander talking and laughing with Penn. Later in the day, commissary wagons marked "C.S.A." rolled to the side of the house and loaded on what looked like hams and sacks of flour. Whipple marveled, "She's a wonder! Look at her waving a handkerchief to that Reb officer in charge."

Lem said, "Reckon she could say 'howdy' to the devil and take no hurt. Hi-yi! Big clouds coming up."

Out of the east and over the blue dome of a distant hill, great banks of clouds rolled, blotted out the sun and piled on in heavy menace. A brassy light filled the world. A quick, high wind sprang up, set the barn creaking and drove straw and chaff in whirling spirals through the doors. "Bad tidin's a-comin'," crooned Lem. "Bad tidin's beatin' against the walls." He shivered.

The light outside changed from brass to bronze. The wind howled louder and jagged lightning leaped over the ranges. Thunder blasted out, its echoes springing from river valley to rock escarpment. The whole barn began to dance and shiver to the pounding rain.

Rain drummed louder and louder. Whipple shouted, "Listen! Quiet for a minute. I think someone's calling."

He held his breath. Faint and blurred, but unmistakable, someone was calling through the storm. Whipple said, "It's Penn!" and darted to the edge of the loft. He saw her running through slanting sheets of water that sent up a white spray about her feet. Thick stabs of rain burst against her waterproof cloak like tiny bombs. She raced into the barn, stopped abruptly, one hand raised and lips slightly

parted. She seemed to gather herself, then called, "Whipple!" in a high, broken voice.

Whipple slid down the ladder. "What is it? Lightning hit the house?" She only shook her head and gasped. Her face was dead white and her eyes staring. He said again, "What *is* it?"

She caught his arms. "Andrews! Mr. Andrews!"

"What! He's here already?"

She shook her head violently. "No! No! They caught him. The day he left McGavin's. Wollam got in trouble and he went back to help him."

"Caught him? Where is he? At Swims's?"

Again she shook her head and water splattered from her hood. "Atlanta! They hanged him! He's dead!"

Whipple stared at her, as though not quite comprehending. He felt a band tighten inside his head and his face seemed stiff and sore. His mouth and throat were suddenly dry and he heard himself stammer, "No!" in a hoarse voice.

Penn still held his sleeves and he looked stupidly down at her. She cried, "It's true! One of our people rode by just now. It's on the telegraph. James Andrews! He would have done so much."

Whipple was hardly aware of the roar of the storm, of the dim barn, of Penn looking up at him with tragedy in her eyes. Far clearer was the memory of the tall, erect man who stood in McGavin's door, one arm raised as though in benediction. He had gone on with the pilot and Wollam. Wollam had been in trouble and Andrews, to help him, had stepped from freedom onto the gallows. Whipple swallowed with difficulty. "How about John — John Wollam?"

"We haven't heard. Just about Mr. Andrews. He was the best of any of us in this work. I don't know what we'll do now. I can't see ahead —"

He straightened himself with an effort. "Yes. He was about the best man I ever knew. We'll just have to keep up his work. He'd want it that way." Slowly the pounding storm, the barn, became real to him. "Thanks for telling me, Penn. Now you'd better get back to the house. The next people who come by may not be the right sort. What do you want us to do?"

She let go his sleeves. "You've got to stay hidden. If they took you again —" She stopped, gathered her cloak about her, and faced the

door. Then she poised motionless for an instant and sped away through the rain.

Climbing the ladder to the loft was endless, exhausting, as though the weight of the news were crushing down on Whipple's shoulders. At the top, Tom caught his arm and swung him up into the hay. "What was it, Whip?"

Whipple's head throbbed as he answered in a dull, flat tone, "They caught Andrews. He's been hanged in Atlanta!"

Tom said, "God!" in a dazed voice. He rested one hand on a low beam and stared vacantly at the blank wall. Lem knelt in the hay, his jaw sagging and his head shaking slowly from side to side.

Whipple stretched out close by the entrance to the hiding place, one arm flung across his forehead. His mind dully accepted the fact of Andrews's recapture and death, and at the same time tried to reject it. So much quiet vitality, such calm steadfastness of purpose, could not be taken from the world by a length of hemp. In his memory, Andrews lived so vividly that he seemed almost to blot out the news. Whipple saw him again, illumined by a flash of lightning in the woods by the War Trace road. In the bright morning at Big Shanty he calmly left the car and strolled toward the *General*. In the foulness of Swims's cellar he remained steady and unshaken by the vile surroundings and by the heavy threat that hung over him. Lem had been right. There was a glory to him.

Lamplight, soft on the mahogany of the living room, fell gently on Penn's light brown hair and on Sharon's darker curls. Whipple sat hunched by the little table where the derringer still lay, its harsh muzzle resting on the delicate tracery of a carved ivory fan. Tom was opposite, his legs stretched out and his hands jammed deep in his pockets. From the doorway, Lem watched somberly, his eyes seldom leaving the two girls.

Whipple said, "I'm glad word came from Mitchel."

Penn touched Sharon's hand. "Too bad you've another night ride, my dear."

Sharon tapped her spurred boot on the floor. "It's much better this way. After the news about Mr. Andrews, I just couldn't sit still."

Tom brightened. "Mean you're going with us?"

"Part of the way. But you'll be on foot, you know."

Whipple said grimly, "Don't worry about us. You'll have to use that spur to keep up, now that we're heading straight for blue uniforms. We'll get Mitchel to find something for Lem."

Penn shook her head. "Lem can't be wasted just hanging around a camp. He's coming with me."

Lem's somberness lightened a little. "Be mighty proud, Mis' Grainger."

"Lem and I settled that when you were talking with the pilots," added Penn.

Sharon got up quickly. "Tincup and Reese must be ready now. Good-by, Penn. I'll probably see you soon."

Tom jumped for her cape and held it out for her. "Come on, Sharon. We'll start out together."

Penn rose and Whipple looked down at her. "I'm glad it was you, Penn, who brought the news about Andrews—if we had to have it."

"I hated to," said Penn simply.

"I know. Now where do you go from here?"

"Home to Duck River."

"I wish you weren't going there. It's too far."

Color rose in Penn's cheeks and her eyes dropped. "We all have to go where we're needed. And this is Mrs. Mabry's house—her own."

He put out his hands impulsively but she moved away as though unaware of the gesture. "We mustn't keep the others waiting."

He followed her to the porch. "Good-by, Whipple. And good luck." She held out a small hand.

He caught it, seized the other. "I'm going to write."

Her hands suddenly tightened in his. "You may not have to," she said in a low voice.

Back in the living room Penn parted the curtains. She felt a growing sense of solitude as she thought of the five people winding over the crest in the night. She tried to shrug it off, tried to shrug off with it a thought that she had formulated in her home by Duck River, that Whipple Sheldon would be a very easy person to be fond of. She turned from the window and called to Lem. There were letters to be written that would help re-establish his freedom. Judge Temple in Knoxville would be glad to help.

The trail wound through tree-choked valleys, over spinelike ridges. Whipple and Ben each caught one of Reese's stirrups while Tom stayed by Sharon, carrying on a broken conversation in half whispers. "Where'll you go when we reach our lines?" he asked.

"To Huntsville in Alabama, where Mitchel is."

It was hard to talk, making a low tone carry up to Sharon while rocks and roots under his feet jolted him. "Don't see — how you — do — it. Can I see you when we get to Huntsville?"

"I don't know how long I'll be there."

Tom's voice rose. "You could let me know, couldn't you?"

Tincup loomed close in the darkness. "No more talkin'!"

The crest of a ridge opened out, a great plateau where brooks slid between neat banks and the ground was rough with old plowings. Reese rode on in silence, rising in his stirrups from time to time to question the night. On the other side, Ben Tincup kept up his click-clicking.

Reese pulled up and stared ahead, hands folded on the pommel of his saddle. "Nigh to dawnin'," he said.

"I figured," said the Cherokee.

"What we do?"

"Keep on."

"Sun and all?" Reese sounded dubious.

"We must be close to Catron's cabin, hittin' south and east like we been doin'. He's warned."

Reese started his horse just as Sharon and Tom came abreast. Tom looked up at the pilot and realized that he could see him much more clearly. By a tree-lined stream that plunged down a slope, Tincup held up his hand and Reese halted. Whipple made out wet rocks, fallen branches, an old excavation. Reese bent to Tincup. "Upstream or down?"

"I'm lookin' for a sign," said the Cherokee. "Hi! Yonder!"

Then Whipple saw the girl. She leaned against a tree across the stream, a heavy bucket at her feet. She seemed swathed in some dark stuff above which her face shimmered. She was looking across the stream, apparently not seeing the party. Then with a weary gesture she threw back her dark cloak. The dress underneath was whiter than her face. Across her breast was daubed an arrow, crude

but distinct. The barb pointed downstream. She bent, filled her bucket, and moved away through the trees without a backward glance.

Reese gathered his reins. "That Bonnie Kate Catron?"

"Same," answered the Cherokee. "Get goin'." They rode on.

Tincup saw the gray riders first as they eased their mounts down a slope to the east. He shouted, "Hit out!"

Clinging to the stirrup, Whipple was swung along. He glanced over his shoulder and saw Tom holding fast to Sharon's leather. Tincup had vanished.

Far in the rear, other hoofs drummed and a distant voice roared, "Halt, God damn it!" Whipple strained to keep up with Reese, who was setting his mount at a steep slope ahead. There was a broad stream beyond the slope, a wooden bridge, and a wisp of a road that ran into deep woods. On the other side of the bridge Reese suddenly wheeled his horse about and Whipple heard the bridge timbers echo to the passage of Sharon's mount. He too had seen the glint of metal in the woods ahead and caught the toss of manes. Reese snarled, "Boxed, by God!"

Sharon cried out, "Look! Look! They're blue! They're ours!"

Whipple could only lean against Reese's saddle and stare at the bearded sergeant who rode out of the woods with eight troopers trotting behind him. The Southern patrol wheeled sharply and trailed away. Whipple still stared at the men of the 4th Ohio who streamed out of the woods. Tom was beside him, wordless and panting hard. Sharon pushed her horse toward a hard-faced captain and pointed to Tom and Whipple. She was speaking emphatically. The captain rose in his stirrups and whipped off his kepi. "Boys, here's two of Andrews's men. Feed 'em! Stuff 'em! Then bring 'em to the major."

A wave of blue engulfed Tom and Whipple. Men hoisted them onto horses in a welter of shouts. "Got away clean, by God!" . . . "Hey! Where's the others?" . . . "How 'bout the boys from the 33rd?" In the background, calm and unconcerned, Ben Tincup came slowly across the bridge.

In a few moments Tom and Whipple and Sharon were drinking

coffee and eating white bread and bacon while a whiskered major showered questions on them. Whipple shook his head. "I tell you, we traveled at night. Please send us on quick as you can."

"Hold on," said Tom. "Sharon's cup's empty."

Whip nodded approvingly. Tom certainly was looking after Sharon.

The two pilots drifted back into the woods, Reese with a brief jerk of his hat in Sharon's direction, Tincup with a grudging "So long." Whipple mounted his borrowed horse and joined Sharon and Tom who were riding down the road with an escort of a corporal and four troopers. Behind him there was still cheering, which seemed to slight the memory of Andrews and the men who still lay in Rebel prisons. He and Tom were merely lucky and luck was nothing to applaud.

There were more and more Union troops on the road, camped in the fields along the Little Sequatchie. The roofs of Jasper showed off to the right and Whipple's chest contracted as he recognized landmarks.

There was the grocery, there the feed store where the Rebel officer's dilemma had provided transportation on to Chattanooga. He shivered. How had he been able to plunge so heedlessly straight into the heart of the hostile army? "Damn cocky fool!" Whipple told himself.

At last the party cleared the town and began the long slope that led to the river. Tom bent toward Sharon. "Getting tired?"

"I'm all right." She looked east. The day had turned clear and nearly fifteen miles away the bold profile of Lookout Mountain showed above the maze of intervening ridges and the broad loop of the Tennessee. She pointed to the distant crest. "Remember that place, Whip?"

"Sure do. And there's another place down by the river, where I nearly got both of us caught."

From the ferry they were passed across to a blockhouse on the railroad and hurried onto a flatcar with hastily cobbled board seats. The engine hooted and rolled them on slowly toward Huntsville.

Whipple settled himself. "Last lap. We're headed home."

"*You* are," said Sharon as though to herself.

Tom looked keenly at her. She had grown increasingly silent the last few miles and that hollow look that he had caught in her eyes at Penn's was more apparent. He thought, "She's remembering her home and her father." He carefully hid his own elation and sat silently on the seat between her and Whipple.

There were few troops along the line, merely small guards and roving cavalry patrols. Fieldpieces were emplaced near bridges or by dumps of spare rails, lumber, and coils of telegraph wire. It was obvious from these measures that Mitchel still could not hold the line in strength.

Tom edged closer to Sharon. "What do you do when you get to Huntsville?"

She brushed back a lock of hair. "Go back to Mrs. Ingalls, I imagine. She's supposed to be my cousin. General Mitchel sent me to her."

"I'd like to ride over and see you."

"I—I'll try and let you know—only—" The train slowed in a series of sharp bumps and she was thrown half across Tom. She colored and said, "I'm so clumsy. Oh, Whip—"

But Whipple was on his feet, clinging to the side of the car. The train had stopped short of Huntsville and Sharon stared in amazement at a mass of red-shirted men who yelled and waved blue kepis. Close by the track a short, wiry captain with mustache and imperial was reaching up to shake hands with Whipple and Tom, who had crossed over behind Sharon. Other heads surged up near the captain's, young faces, weather-beaten faces, seamed, sunburned faces, all flushed with noise and excitement. Whipple was leaning far out, catching at the hands that reached up toward him. The hollow look about Sharon's eyes deepened as the significance of the scene struck her. The men were Kinnyard's. Whip and Tom had come home.

Whipple found the sea of faces blurring. There was Nick Staples, Cleary, the stable sergeant, Laity, Snelling, the Davis twins and Alden. But most of all he saw Kinnyard, his tight, strong face alight with a welcome that was professional as well as personal. He tried to catch Kinnyard's words over the shouts of the others. "Delighted—congratulations to you both—got special orders about

you, Sheldon. Get into uniform and then — and once again, damn glad to have you both back!”

Tom shouted, “Wait a minute! Here’s a real soldier for you, Captain — Miss Sharon McDaniel.” But Sharon had vanished. He shouted, “Where is she?” and jumped to the other side of the car. There was no sign of her, only a light carriage which bowled swiftly away, leaving a long thread of dust hanging in the still air behind it.

P A R T V

Whitney Sherston, Esq.

BUGLES were blowing all through the camps as Whipple walked up the hill toward the farmhouse where General Ormsby Mitchel was quartered. The sun had set and the river valley was flooded with an apple-green light that faded to soft lavender. A breeze whispered up from the river, carrying the countless smells of an army in the field, a smell that was compounded of fresh hay, of wood smoke and coffee, of good horses, of canvas and leather. That smell belonged to nothing else in the world and once a man had it in his nostrils he never forgot it; would hunger for it when away, would feel a quickening of his pulses when he found it again. Now it told Whipple that he was truly back.

There was more than the camp smell, the camp noises. His uniform. He settled his shoulders in the tight, hip-length jacket with its first sergeant's chevrons, tilted his kepi, hitched at his saber, heard the clink of the spurs that were strapped to the dragoon boots with their protecting leather flap rising above each kneecap.

Mitchel rose briskly from the lamplit table and crossed the room as Whipple entered. "At ease, Sergeant." He held out a small, sinewy hand and Whipple was surprised at the strength of his grip. "Very glad to see you back. Terrible about Andrews. It's a great loss to the Union." He pointed to a chair. "Sit down. I've got a good many questions for you."

Whipple faced the flow of questions as best he could. As he talked, he studied the general. He looked more worn and tense than when Whipple had last seen him, but the restless energy, the keen, probing mind, the unquestioning determination, were unchanged.

At the end of a half hour, Mitchel passed his hands over his eyes and leaned back. "That's about the way I've been hearing things, Sergeant, but you've cleared a few points for me." He sighed. "It's a pity that they moved you before the Madison rescue plan got working."

Whipple threw back his head. "Now we've got to plan something else. Tom Madden and I could guide a rescue party right into town and get the rest of the boys out so quick that Leadbetter'd forget he'd ever held them. Swims's is on Lookout Street and from Market Street or Georgia Avenue —"

"It's no use," said Mitchel, shaking his head slowly.

"No use, sir?" Whipple's voice rose. "A hundred men could do it."

"Too late. Every last raider, from Chattanooga and Knoxville, has been shifted to Atlanta again."

Whipple gripped the table. "I don't give a damn *where* they are. Those men — *you* don't know what they're going through. I do. It's too much for any human being to stand." He recovered himself, flushing. "Sorry — sir."

Mitchel said wearily, "We'll waive rank for the moment. You may take it for granted we're planning. But we need a long chain to reach deep into Georgia. Sometimes links break. Like this." He handed a soiled scrap of paper to Whipple. It read, "Joe Blaine's house empty since Tuesday." Mitchel went on, "Blaine was a strong link. He's been picked up by the Rebs, of course. We're trying to replace him, but Andrews's raid stirred things up so it'll take a lot of time."

"But that's the one thing you haven't got," burst out Whipple. "I don't take any stock in the chance of exchange now. If there's no other way, I'll go back through the Reb lines, give myself up and start the boys working. At least I know a little of how things go on the outside and they don't."

Mitchel looked thoughtfully at him, thumb and finger slowly kneading his square chin. "You'd go through the lines again?"

Whipple jumped to his feet. "Yes! If it's the only way."

Mitchel turned his piercing eyes on Whipple. "Sit down, Sergeant. I've several more things to say. In the utmost confidence. Forget about Atlanta, so far as you're concerned. All that can be done's being done." He got up and paced about the room with short, quick steps. "I realize that it's hard for you to appreciate, but there are far more important matters than that." He stopped in the middle of the room and faced Whipple. "You ran into some odd people coming up from Chattanooga, didn't you?"

Whipple shrugged. "That's why I'm here and not at Atlanta."

"Of course. Odd people, 'the right sort of people,' they call themselves. Men and women like them are scattered all through the Confederacy. They really amount to islands, Union islands, in the swamp of the Confederacy and they'll work for us without limit or question. You can see their value, of course."

"Obvious," said Whipple, rubbing a dull red fetter mark on his wrist.

"It ought to be. To many, it isn't. These islands, as I like to think of them, are unorganized so far as we're concerned. At times, they are actually discouraged or slighted. What you ran into in Tennessee is a flimsy, haphazard arrangement. It could bust like a paper bag overnight, and that it hasn't so far is due mostly to men like Oliver Temple and Dan Ellis or women like Mrs. George W. Mabry. A little intelligent coöperation on our part would turn Tennessee solid Union. But those people don't get it."

"Seemed to work pretty well for us," said Whipple.

Mitchel jammed his hands into his pockets. "It could have worked a lot better. But —" and his chin jutted — "creaky as Tennessee is, it runs like a watch compared to other parts of the South. That can all be changed. We can link up those Union islands, let them develop the information we need and pass it on to us so that if we move, or the Rebs move, we'll have a constant flow of reliable intelligence that'll tell us what's happening over the next hill or around the next bend."

"Sounds good," said Whipple.

Mitchel snapped his fingers. "It's got to *be* good. A plan like that's got to cover the whole South, but a job as big as that's up to the War Department. I'm going to begin building right here and maybe when they see it work, men with more stars than I will push it hard. Andrews was going to be sort of a shuttle between me and all those islands south of me."

"You'll have a hard time replacing him," said Whipple.

"Yes," said Mitchel. "I want a man who, among other things, is a soldier, which Andrews wasn't. I want that man —" he paused and looked intently at Whipple — "I want that man to be you."

Whipple's boots scraped on the floor. "*Me?* In Andrews's place?"

"No. In a place that you'll make for yourself."

"But that's perfectly crazy," said Whipple, staring.

"All war's crazy and often the biggest lunatic will win."

"But I've never even been south until now."

Mitchel allowed himself a slight smile. "Are you sure you're wise in criticizing the judgment of your superior? As a matter of fact, Andrews suggested it, through odd channels, when you were at Swims's. Mrs. Grainger wrote to the same effect while she was hiding you and Madden."

"No!" said Whipple. "I've done the job I volunteered for and I want to get back to the battery."

Mitchel raised his eyebrows. "To the battery? Now I'd understood that you were counting on going home for a QMC commission."

"Damn the commission. Kinnyard's got a job for me."

"Good. But so have I."

Whipple shook his head slowly. "That job was never tailored for me. Anyway —" he brightened and began to speak faster — "anyway, now I've got you right in a corner. They've got conscription through the South. How long would I last down there before the provost picked me up?"

Mitchel sat down and folded his hands. "We've figured some sort of cover for anyone who went down there. The cover'll fit you. You couldn't pass as an Englishman, but you'd make a wonderful Canadian." He unlocked a small ledger and leafed through it. "Your name will be Whitney Sherston. It's near enough to your own so that it won't be a shock to you to hear it. Yes — here are the other details. You live at 828 Yonge Street, Toronto, and you're pro-Southern without being fanatic. You represent syndicates with options on goods that the South needs. You know important leaks in the sea blockade. Oh, don't worry. It will all be bona fide. I have valuable connections in the business world and I called on them to help."

Whipple's head throbbed as he sought arguments against the whole plan. He could only say thickly, "It won't work. I don't talk like a Canadian."

"How does a Canadian talk?" asked Mitchel politely.

"Well — different, anyway."

"You've seen Captain Streeter of Sill's. Would you take him for a Canadian?"

"Streeter? Of course not."

Mitchel smiled. "He lives next door to you in Toronto. Born there. He'll coach you. You'll have Canadian papers that'd satisfy the British Minister at Washington. Why, good Lord, man, when it's found out that you're a possible source of supply, the various Reb departments will fight over you."

Whipple said acidly, "Yes — to see who'll shove me into jail first."

Mitchel clasped his hands behind his neck and looked at the ceiling. "I guess it's asking a good deal. Sitting back as I do, I lose perspective. There's Gavin McGavin, whom you met. I hope he gets back from Atlanta all right. Miss McDaniel's going up to Knoxville to see why we haven't heard from various people recently. And Mrs. Grainger is going down to Tupelo in Mississippi before long. Yes, I can see that it's asking a lot."

Whipple slowly got up, rested his hands on the chair back. "Hell's delight! What you're asking me to do is to try the same thing that two girls are doing every day in the week. I *don't* like the job, but I'll try it so long as you think I'm the man for it."

"You're the best *available* man for it. The ideal doesn't exist. You're sure that you realize the importance of this, how it can be developed?"

"Yes, or I'd have refused. What you want is for me to organize what you call these 'islands.'"

"That's not necessary," said Mitchel. "We know where most of them are. They'll take care of themselves and really get going when a Union man like yourself gets in touch with them. You'll encourage them in every way of course, counteract what they read and hear in the South. Mostly you'll use them as channels through which to send news to me. All sorts of news. Troop movements, enemy morale, production, armament, equipment. Streeter'll have a good detailed list for you."

Whipple nodded slowly. "That sounds still better."

Mitchel got up and shook hands. "You've chosen a hard road."

"That's all right," said Whipple, turning away.

"Yes — no need for speeches. You'll start on this alone?"

"Of course. I got Tom Madden into that other mess. He'll stay out of this."

"You're best off that way. I'll keep the entry 'On detached service' on your record. Go back to camp now and no talking about the

job. I'll have a word with Kinnyard. You'll report to Captain Streeter tomorrow after officers' call."

"*Tomorrow* morning?"

"I'd like to give you a chance to get your breath but I can't. Don't be startled by your first assignment. Columbus figured he'd go east by sailing west."

"I understand, sir. Good night."

As Whipple walked down the road that led to camp, he rubbed the sleeve of his jacket. The right chevron was frayed but the battery tailor could renew it in the morning. Reality caught him. Renew it for what? People didn't wear blue uniforms with red first sergeants' stripes where he was going. Beyond a line of picketed horses a cavalry bugle sang out "Tattoo." Bugles spoke only to uniforms, calling men to quarters or blaring out over the beat of hoofs as a battery swept from column into line, the red guidon proud on its flank. For him, there would be no bugles tonight.

He kicked at a white stone and his shiny saber clanked against his leg. "Suppose I better slip out of camp before first-call tomorrow. No! I'll take first-call and reveille and stables just as if I were back for good. I'll take those formations tomorrow. After that—" He shivered and cursed himself for shivering. "Penn could keep her mouth shut if she wanted and live safely by Duck River just as if there weren't any war. But she won't. If she can do all this—"

Never before had Whipple worked so hard as he did in the little house that was hidden in a grove west of Stevenson, close to the Tennessee. Captain Streeter, tall and unsmiling, sat with him at a table that was covered with maps and books and pamphlets and newspapers. His clean-shaven face never betrayed the least weariness as, from early morning until past midnight, he lectured Whipple. And while this coaching went on, a tailor put together a complete wardrobe with every garment marked to show its Canadian origin. A collection of valises and grips was assembled and scored with notations of customs offices and steamship lines.

By map and paper and pamphlet Whipple tried to project mind and spirit into the atmosphere of Ontario. He came to know Toronto from Tinning's Wharf to Hogg's Hollow, from the Humber to the Don. Streeter's toneless voice built for him the people

who filled the lake city. Whipple learned of the fierce divisions dating from the 1830's between the followers of William Lyon Mackenzie and the adherents of the Family Compact, absorbed the names of those who had guided the times.

He began to fill in an imaginary life for himself. He could trace his days under a tutor, then at the Blue School that passed him on to Upper Canada College. He learned how a follower of the Compact would address a French-speaking adherent of Papineau in Lower Canada, could deduce the attitude to be taken toward a liberal of the Robert Baldwin type, could assume the proper tone in which to speak of the death the year before of the radical-democrat, William Lyon Mackenzie. Or he could switch his role and strike the correct manner in which a Mackenzie-ite would refer to Bishop Strachan or the notorious Gourlay trial.

Once Whipple protested. "You're cramming too much stuff into me. Damn it all, I'm not going to Canada."

"No," agreed Streeter. "You've got to take Canada south with you. You've got to be ready to meet real Canadians, Englishmen, Southerners who've been in Canada or who've followed Canadian affairs. Your margin of safety could lie in knowing about Strachan's misuse of Upper Canada College funds or in your grounds for not believing that Dr. John Rolph sold out Mackenzie's rebellion in '37. Now take the case of Allan MacNab's knighthood. MacNab was probably the damndest —"

On some days Whipple's mind had to leap from Upper Canada to the far reaches of the South while Streeter held forth on Mitchel's "Union islands." There was an old, old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, whom Whipple must visit and who would pass him on to others like herself. He must on no account fail to reach Major Penhallow, a blind veteran of the War of 1812 and of the Mexican War who lived not far from Birmingham. There were travel routes to memorize, names of river steamers and their captains, addresses of importers, brokers and middlemen, a maze of business terms involving letters of credit, consular invoices, bills of lading, manifests, bottomry bonds and charter parties.

Aching head in his hands, he studied his own dossier, read marvelously fabricated letters addressed to himself at Toronto, at Halifax, and at St. George in Bermuda. He read the crabbed Latin

of his own degree from Upper Canada College, looked at a photograph of a very pretty Canadian girl. There was a thick packet of letters from her to him, expressing such affection that Whipple felt embarrassed.

One night Captain Streeter said abruptly, "I've done all I can for you. If what I've given you sticks, you'll be all right. If not — well, then I've wasted a lot of government time and money. Here's your letter of credit for a thousand, sterling. Here's five hundred in Federal bills. Be ready to leave in an hour."

Whipple stared. "In an hour? My God, that's not enough notice."

Streeter said indifferently, "If you can think of anything that'll make you readier than you are now, let's have it."

Whipple got up stiffly. "You're right. There's nothing else — except a new spine and a few more brains and maybe news that the war's over."

"Get going, then," said Streeter in the same dry voice. "And — oh — ah — you know how to get word back here. If things puzzle you too much, I'll see what I can do." He shook hands stiffly and walked out.

Whipple stared after him. "I'll be damned if I don't think he's more nervous than I am."

The afternoon sun beat down on the dusty streets of Altamont, Tennessee. The still air was heavy with the scent of roses that smothered little gardens in front of houses, that stained fields beyond the town where peach trees grew in long, marching rows. Whitney Sherston, British subject and native of Toronto, sniffed the rich fragrance as the carriage cleared the little town and headed west toward a chain of hills whose tops showed just beyond the rim of the plateau. He wore a silk hat, rather low in the crown. His frock coat was a fine, lightweight wool, dark blue with brass buttons, and fell open to show a flowered waistcoat and a frilled shirt. He rested his gloved hands on a gold-headed stick that was wedged between the knees of his fawn-colored trousers. On the seat beside him Morris Broad, fat, ruddy, and jovial, mopped his forehead and fanned himself with a Panama hat. "Right friendly thing, old Pollet sending you on to me, Mr. Sherston," said Broad. "How is he and how are things in Nashville?"

"His gout bothers him," said Whipple. "As for Nashville — the Yankees seem to behave better than I expected they would, but I fancy that for people like Mr. Pollet, these are rather uneasy times."

Broad settled his stock. "It can't last. McClellan's not doing so well in Virginia, and around here — well, you'll see when you get south."

"You don't think I'll have any trouble?" asked Whipple.

"Not the least. We've got ways."

Whipple inclined his head gravely. "Does credit to your ingenuity, Mr. Broad. I was rather taken aback when Mr. Pollet suggested Montgomery and Mobile. My aim had, at first at least, been Richmond."

"No, no, no," said Broad quickly. "Those Virginia people, they think the whole war's right up there. Damn it, *they* haven't got their state capital occupied like we have. What does Virginia care? Nothing. No, Mr. Sherston. A cargo of medicines, a cargo of arms or cloth or machinery landed at Mobile'll help the cause a sight more than stuff consigned to Richmond."

Whipple rubbed his chin reflectively. "You're sure that this affair will last long enough to make it worth our while? I could hardly commit my principals if it's going to flicker out by fall or early winter."

Broad sighed. "Wish I could say we'd be in Washington by then."

"The news we received in Toronto was, from your standpoint, quite optimistic," said Whipple. "I recall one statement in the press that you thought you could whip the Yankees with popguns."

Broad shook his head ruefully. "A right lot of people did figure on that," he admitted. Then he began to chuckle. "Trouble was, Mr. Sherston, that the damn Yanks didn't *use* popguns. Ah, here we are. Judge Quigley's place. You'll meet people you ought to know here."

The carriage swung up a curving drive past rows of vivid rhododendrons. In the distance Whipple saw wide cotton fields where black heads bobbed up and down. At a long, low white house, a Negro with a bishop's voice and carriage admitted them, intoning, "Rest yo' things right here. The Jedge is lickerin' on the west po'ch."

On a porch where thick, flowering vines filtered the sun to a pale, aqueous glow, Whipple saw two men rise from their chairs,

frosted glasses in their hands. Broad said ceremoniously, "Judge, I want you to meet Mr. Whitney Sherston, a British subject and a fine, Christian gentleman. Mr. Sherston, Judge Quigley and Mr. Lambert. You gentlemen'll be interested in Mr. Sherston's views."

Quigley, an enormously fat wheezy man, and Mr. Lambert, thin, sallow, and bald, allowed that they were honored to meet a friend of their very good friend, Broad. Then from the darkened drawing room a woman's voice said, "Why Judge! What were you and Mr. Lambert shouting so about?"

Quigley blew out his bearded cheeks. "Just something in the *Atlanta Confederacy*. Ah — I shall discuss it with you later."

A frail, gray-haired woman in silvery silk stepped onto the porch. She stopped suddenly as she saw Whipple, a question in her gentle, faded eyes. "I — I didn't realize at all —" she began.

The Judge presented Whipple with much ceremony. Mrs. Quigley smiled and he felt an instinctive liking for her and a still deeper disgust at his own role. She said, "From Canada? We're grateful to you for coming to us from so far away."

Whipple managed to say, "I assure you, Madame, that I would go much farther and still count the distance short."

Quigley rumbled in approval, "There's your real Englishman for you. Always said they were just like us."

Mrs. Quigley called softly into the darkened room. "Come out, my dear, and meet a Canadian guest." She smiled again at Whipple. "A charming young lady. Her mother was one of my dearest friends."

A light step sounded in the house, came nearer. Inwardly tense and alert as he was, Whipple had to set his jaws hard to repress a violent start as Penn Grainger, her slim rounded figure set off by dove gray with the faintest hint of blue piping, joined Mrs. Quigley. Her face, with its frame of light brown ringlets, showed nothing beyond the most impersonal polite interest. He found himself bowing to her and murmuring an acknowledgment of the introduction. The other men she seemed to know quite well. He heard her saying, "From Canada? Then we may surely count you a friend of the South."

There was nothing in voice or gesture that told of previous meetings. Her soft eyes were looking on someone whom she had

never seen before and who would at once pass out of her knowledge. He did not dare meet her glance fully, fearing what the others might read in his own expression. Mrs. Quigley diverted attention. "Surely, Judge, you ought to let us know what you were talking about. We could hear you from upstairs."

Quigley passed her a newspaper, one thick finger pointing to a column. The scant color left her cheeks and she handed it back after a quick glance. "How horrible," she said.

"Not bad news for the Confederacy, I trust," remarked Whipple.

The Judge gave him the paper. It seemed to Whipple that the others must have felt the impact of the news on him, that shock must have shown through the taut muscles of his face. Lambert said, "We'd value your opinion, sir. The Judge and I do not agree."

Whipple felt the paper crackle in his hands and his voice sounded thin. "It should have been done weeks ago. Under Her Majesty's Government there could have been no question."

"I can't agree with either of you," protested Quigley. "Read the full story, Mr. Sherston."

It was torture to stand there, staring at headlines and fine print. "Fate of the Land Pirates! Justice Served!" Then the names. Marion Ross! Ross had hailed him as "Redlegs" on the War Trace road. At Swims's, his fine voice had started the songs that bolstered morale. Sam Slavens had repeatedly feigned illness in order to give a share of his own scant ration to some raider whose spirit seemed to ebb. Perry Shadrack's unfailing wit and humor had often cracked through the black wall of depression that rose in the cellar. More names . . . John Scott; Sam Robertson; George Wilson; William Campbell. Hanged! Hanged at Atlanta! He lowered the sheet and managed to speak. "Your government had no choice, gentlemen."

Penn said quietly, "That was well done."

"Penn, my *dear!*" said Mrs. Quigley.

Whipple felt strength flow through him, knowing Penn's approval had not referred to the executions.

It was like being shackled again to sit there on the shady porch, to throw himself utterly into the role of Canadian visitor while all the time his mind was seething with the news of the executions. Seven had been hanged. What about the remaining fourteen?

The Negro brought iced drinks that Whipple sipped without tast-

ing, barely aware of the act. From the very top of his mind he replied to questions, then framed some on his own behalf. Streeter's drilling had been so thorough that Whipple was able mechanically to interlard his sentences with allusions to the new capital at Ottawa, to his fiancée at Quebec ("straight English stock, of course"), and to the waning power of Bishop Strachan. He wanted desperately to be rid of host and hostess, of Lambert and Broad. He wanted to be left alone with Penn, who would understand about Marion Ross and the others.

Broad was saying again that Whipple would find no trouble in going south. "Why, your passport alone will get you through," he concluded.

"How about business matters, though?" asked Quigley.

Whipple managed a smile. "Cubans and Mexicans can buy as well as anyone else. If I want to sail from Mobile, why should the Yankees care?"

Broad winked. "In any event, we've got ways of passing you along so you won't see so much as a scrap of blue cloth. Now, Judge, I'll be greatly obliged if you'll write a letter or so for Mr. Sherston." He mentioned a few names and the Judge nodded in agreement. Lambert spoke of men not only in Union-held territory but in Minnesota and Ohio and Vermont who were making great efforts for the South. Whipple reflected wryly that there were Confederate islands as well as Union.

When Judge Quigley and Broad vanished into the study to write the letters, Mrs. Quigley led the others to her rose garden. Whipple followed anxiously, hoping that he would have a chance to speak to Penn, but she kept close to her hostess and he was forced to talk to Lambert, who was pathetically eager to be reassured of the possibility of British recognition of the Richmond government.

At an angle in the graveled path, Lambert stepped forward to hold a sagging branch above Mrs. Quigley's head. Penn greeted Whipple with an utterly natural smile as he moved up beside her. "I suppose that your season in Canada is so short that you have to force most of your roses under glass, Mr. Sherston."

Whipple saw that Mrs. Quigley and Lambert had moved a dozen steps ahead. He lowered his voice. "Look here — there are still fourteen —"

She frowned. "You *can't* leave your role, even when you're alone. You did splendidly when they showed you the paper. That's something you've got to hold to *all the time*."

"I want to see you again," he said.

"I don't know whether it's possible. So listen to me now. You'll start out with Mr. Broad tonight. He'll get you passed on to Tuscumbia in Alabama. That way you'll come into the South from the North and vouched for by the Confederate sympathizers."

Whipple smiled. "So that's what Mitchel meant when he said Columbus went east by sailing west. What do I do at Tuscumbia?"

"You'll go right on to Montgomery. You know whom to see and what to do?"

"Yes," said Whipple. "It's all clear enough. But look here, Penn. I'm going to see you again before I go."

"Don't talk so earnestly. Remember that we've just met. See me again? I've got nothing more to tell you. I was sent here to see how you behaved. Now I can tell General Mitchel that you've done very well so far."

"Suppose you couldn't tell him that?"

"Then you'd go back and they'd have to find someone else."

Whipple looked down on Penn's light brown hair, on the curve of her long lashes and the rounding of her cheek that seemed whiter and clearer than ever in the shade of her parasol. It was absurd, to be strolling through a garden with her and talking of getting through the Union lines. He said, "I mean it — about seeing you again. I didn't have much chance to talk to you when we were hiding in the barn. And when we did come to the house, Tom and Sharon were always there. We can find a way here."

She shook her head. "I'm Mrs. Quigley's guest."

"You mean you don't want to?"

"I mean it wouldn't be wise," she said in a low voice.

Whipple looked along the path. Mrs. Quigley and Lambert had stopped to admire a great burst of Blush Noisette roses. He halted at once by a cascade of sulphur-colored blossoms that glowed pink at the heart. "What a magnificent spray, Mrs. Grainger. We couldn't touch this in Toronto. Look at this cluster here."

Penn bit her lip and stopped beside him. Whipple went on: "You can surely find some way. I want to see you as a person, not just as

someone who tells me what Mitchel wants." She turned her head away slightly but he could see that her eyes were on the ground and that deeper color was creeping into her cheeks. He persisted, "Find a way, Penn. You know the ground here and I don't. Otherwise, I could plan — where and when."

"We're not free to come and go as we like," she said, head still averted.

"You don't want to?"

She was silent. In a whisper that he could barely catch she said, "I'll try — Whip."

He felt a quick lift of spirits. "That means that I'll see you."

She turned from the roses. "Yes — if I'm sure it's safe." The ghost of a smile touched the corners of her full lips. "But you must remember your girl in Quebec. We've talked enough out of our roles. Here comes Mrs. Quigley. Mrs. Quigley, I was telling Mr. Sherston it's such a pity we know so little about Canada."

The night sky arched its thick pattern of stars high over the Quigley house. Whipple paced slowly up and down outside, smoking one of the Judge's fine cigars. The other men, apologizing for the intrusion of local matters, had withdrawn to the study. Penn and Mrs. Quigley had vanished at the end of the long dinner.

As he smoked, Whipple closed his mind to everything save the endless rehearsal of his Canadian role. It was a pity, in a way, the hanging of those Yankee raiders. Law justified it, but common sense should have denied the claim of the law. Clever, these Tennessee Confederates. They certainly appreciated to the full the opportunity of securing supplies that his presence afforded. Extremely pretty guest, that widow friend of Mrs. Quigley's, plenty of fire in her make-up to judge from her remarks about Yankees and the war.

He flicked the ash from his cigar and turned on his heel as though patrolling a beat. Glorious night. There'd still be a hint of chill in the air at home, although the Lord knew the lake front could be hot enough through summer days. You could swelter waiting for the Port Credit coach by the Coffin Block. July and August were scorching at Dundas and Hamilton on the west end of the lake. He turned again on his beat that brought him close by the house where windows gaped cavernously. He checked sharply as white shimmered beyond the nearest sill. He glided closer, whispered, "Penn!"

"Be very quiet. Mrs. Quigley's on the other side of the house, upstairs, but we must be careful."

"Now look. There's got to be some way of my getting word to you and hearing from you."

"It will be hard."

"What of it? It's—oh, Penn, why do you keep on with this business? It'll bring you trouble, bad trouble. Go north. Even if I couldn't hear from you, I'd know that you were safe."

"I can't do that, Whip. We're both working for the same things."

"I'll do it for both. You've kept steadily at this. I played through so much of it. It's my turn to work. You've earned your discharge."

"Hush, Whip."

"Hush, nothing. I—" A soft hand was laid warningly across his mouth. He caught it and pressed his lips against it as it was hurriedly withdrawn. He went on. "But you'll think of me, won't you? I mean of *me*, not just of someone in the same work. You will, Penn, say you will."

"Please, Whip. Oh, I don't dare stay any longer. Good luck and—"

He caught at her hands through the low window. She gave a little gasp and her fingers tightened surprisingly about his. He whispered eagerly, "You will, Penn?"

Suddenly her arms were about his neck and he felt her cheek, soft and cool against his, felt her hair brush his face gently. Her eyes were closed and her lips lifted slowly to him. "I will, Whip. I will. Oh, my dear, be careful." Then the gap of the window was empty.

He recovered himself, picked up the cigar that smoldered where he had flung it, and tried to resume his easy stroll, to fasten his mind on the thirty-mile stretch of Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario. He could only think of Penn's soft voice in the dark, of her sudden glide into his arms.

From the porch Broad called, "Ready, Mr. Sherston? Your bags are in the carriage."

Whipple threw back his shoulders. "Quite ready, Mr. Broad."

A low barouche crackled over the gravel and Broad stepped toward it. "Here we are. Hey! What the devil! Where's Rufus? Who's on that box?"

A voice that sent a sudden thrill through Whipple answered, "Rufe ain't feelin' good, Mr. Broad. I'm Mis' Grainger's freeman, Lem. Got the foreign gen'l'mn's grips all stowed, sir."

"Reckon you'll do," said Broad.

"Reckon he will," thought Whipple as he climbed in.

All the bells of Mobile were clanging and booming, led by great peals from Christ Church on St. Emanuel Street and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception between Conti and Dauphin. All the bells and gongs of the river boats joined in and from Bienville Square, up beyond the docks, cannon echoed in short, coughing bursts. On the deck of the mail boat *St. Charles*, Whipple shivered inwardly while trying to exude benevolent approval. His fellow passengers whooped and shouted.

Down on the docks people were pounding the timbers with flat boards, banging tin pans, pelting a derelict boiler with rocks. A lean Texan slapped Whipple's back. "Hear the Yanks ain't got more'n twenty thousand men left! Ol' Bob Lee'll sick his Texas boys onto 'em and they won't be none left!" He raised his voice above the din. "Damn me for a yellowbelly, but I was scairt when they got so close to Richmond. Hadn't ought to a been!"

Whipple, his shoulders still smarting from the blow, shouted, "Looks as if Lee let 'em come just as far as he wanted them and then smashed 'em."

"He did for sure!" The Texan flourished his hat. "Here we go! Hi-yi! Montgomery-bound. Goin' north like Bob Lee!"

The paddle-wheels churned the water. The steam calliope that was built into the boat shrieked high above the clamor, squealing out "Dixie."

"All the same," thought Whipple, "they were damn well worried. What the hell happened to McClellan, anyway?"

He made his way to his stateroom to get away from the riotous celebration, drew a chair to the window and looked out on the oily calm of the Alabama River. Night was falling and the low banks and the silvery tongues of the bayous faded into the darkness that was heavy with the smell of oleander and crape myrtle.

So far, from the moment Lem had deposited him and Broad at the lonely plantation just over the Alabama line, things had gone easily — almost too easily. Whoever had prepared the papers that lay in the bag on his bed had done a thorough job. Streeter's coaching had been flawless — so long as the pupil applied the teachings.

Now as the dimming river slipped past, white-streaked from the push of the blunt bow, he kept Canada in the front of his mind like a curtain behind which he sorted out what he had seen and heard. The Union islands existed, beyond any doubt, although perhaps they were rather marshier than Mitchel had judged. He recalled the tight-shuttered house on Goat Hill in Montgomery, close by the state capitol where the Congress of the Confederacy had sat prior to its move to Richmond. There, in a stiff, dark parlor that seemed stifling to him, a tall, gaunt old woman, her thin white hair drawn tightly back from a skull-like face, had stood before him in unrelieved black, elbows resting in clawlike hands. Her cold eye had looked past his shoulder while she spoke in terse, brittle sentences.

There were names which he must cross from his memory as being unreliable. There were one or two to add. A certain government official at Birmingham was notoriously indiscreet and should be cultivated. Another at Mobile was vain and stupid and might be flattered into giving information without realizing it. At Anniston, east of the Coosa River, factories were being built for the manufacture of war materials. The officer in charge would welcome a direct foreign source of supply.

Then there was a British merchant at Mobile who could arrange to have information reach the ships of the Union blockade. It would be well for Whipple not to approach him directly, but information could come to his ears through a clubfooted man who lived at Citronelle, not far above the port. And had Whipple any news to send north? She could be in touch with General Mitchel quite easily. There was none? In that case — Whipple had taken his leave then, while the woman still stood, gaunt and motionless, in the darkened room.

South he had gone, by easy stages, now calling at a big, piazzaded farmhouse among live oaks, now at a riverside cabin. At Mobile he found ordnance officers, quartermasters, commissary officers swarming about him, eager to entertain him, to show him about, bidding one against the other for what he had to offer. Ordnance bid against the Quartermaster Corps and both united against the Commissary.

Hotter yet was the competition between state and state. He hinted

to an Alabaman that, after all, leather goods such as harness and boots could be very easily handled by consigning to Matamoros in Mexico and thence smuggled by pack across the Rio Grande into Brownsville, Texas. The reaction was explosive. No, never, by God, sir, never! Texas was grabbing everything. She was almost as bad as Georgia or Virginia. Alabama needed leather, could pay hard cash for it and would have it! Then Whipple hinted to a Texan that leather might be more plentiful if Alabama were not so greedy. Echoes and reverberations of the resultant battle hummed over the telegraph wires clear to Richmond.

Yes, it had been easy. It had been like sliding over thin, slick black ice. You went like the wind, effortless and free. The ice gave almost like rubber beneath your feet, but that didn't slow you up at all as you whizzed along any more than the knowledge that if the ice yielded a fraction more, you would go through into freezing water without warning. So far, the surface over which he shot had been glass-smooth, resilient and tough.

How long would it hold up? The stimulus of excitement was wearing thin. Secret encounters with Southern Unionists, open meetings with Confederate officers and merchants and politicians, began to leave him exhausted and nervous. Try as he might to wrap himself in the armor of his disguise, he imagined that he was developing habits that might give him away—the furtive look as he entered a train or hotel, as he stepped out into a street, the inward shrinking when anyone looked closely at him or seemed to follow him.

And added to the strain of acting was an acute feeling of loneliness. Over and over he relived the last meeting with Penn, felt the touch of her lips on his. And what was Tom up to? What was the battery doing?

Through his waking hours he struggled against growing weariness and strain, forcing his mind to the work in hand. He had come to the conclusion that something was brewing in the South, something big. With each day he grew more aware of it but could not run it to earth. It was as elusive as a cat's tail in the dark, but it was real. Perhaps the blind veteran of 1812 and Mexico, to whom Streeter had commended him, might be able to supply the answer.

All through the night and through the shimmering heat of the day, the *St. Charles* butted north up the Alabama. Whipple watched

it slide in at landings where a deep-porched house stood high on bluffs or where a squat warehouse shot cotton bales down an inclined plane to the steamer's hold. There were thick woods with mistletoe pale against the brilliant green of live oaks. Pine gave way to dense growths of cane, to feathery willows, to whitish sycamores.

At Montgomery, Whipple left the noisy decks and the knife tones of the calliope. In the relative calm of a north-bound morning train he rode on through stretches of hilly country, alighting at a blistered station set in a huddle of flimsy houses. A Negro shambled over to him. "You the foreign gen'l'man fo' Major Penhallow, suh?"

"I've come to call on the major," said Whipple, mopping his forehead in the platform's glare.

"Reckon you is you, suh. I'll bring the carriage right 'round."

The carriage took Whipple east along hilly sand roads. Gnats and mosquitoes and brown, heavy-winged flies whined from the undergrowth, settled in stinging swarms until cool air, pouring from a side valley, carried them off. The driver pointed with his whip to a reddish cone that towered off to the right. "Red Mount'n, suh. Major's close by."

The carriage swung sharply off the road and ran out onto a shoulder of the mountain itself, where, in smooth green fields, a white house nestled. There was a wide garden at one side where a sundial basked on its marble pedestal and a small fountain tinkled, the wind drifting its spray over bright flower beds. Far below the mountain lay a great valley where odd-looking dust plumes hung low and heavy, incongruous in the clear air.

The Negro halted the span and a white-haired gnome of a man rose briskly from a chair under an oleander. "'At's Major, suh," said the Negro.

Whipple left the carriage and entered the garden. Major Penhallow came toward him. Had it not been for the heavily tinted glasses Whipple would not have guessed that his host was blind, so assured was his step. Nor was there any of the blind man's uncertainty in the wrinkled face with its neat snowy mustache and imperial, no hint of hesitation in the strong voice. "I've been expecting you, Mr. Sheldon. Ah, it's good to meet a Union soldier in these times. Sit right down here." The little man found his own place and turned his dark glasses toward a second chair. "I hear you've done

very well. You're a credit to Streeter." He smoothed his silky imperial with a thin, veined hand. "Did Streeter tell you how I knew of him?"

"Only that I was to be sure to come to you."

Penhallow smiled. "I like to think that it's an odd story, but it may seem most ordinary to stirring young people like yourself. You probably don't remember this, if you ever heard of it, but in 1813 our army captured York, or Toronto as they call it now. As we entered the fort the powder magazine blew up and killed General Pike and about two hundred others. The troops got a little out of hand and there was some looting. I came across a wounded Canadian captain and was able to offer some protection to himself and his house. He was Streeter's maternal grandfather. Our families kept in touch for years and when this young Streeter found himself in north Alabama he got word to me through — well, you can imagine the sort of channel." He waved his hand as though apologizing for intruding personal reminiscence. "But the fort at York's all past and forgotten —"

Whipple said quickly, "I assure you that it isn't, sir. Your men carried off the plate from St. James Church. No, sir. That's *not* forgotten at home."

Penhallow nodded in approval. "Very good indeed, Mr. Sheldon. I shall toast your adeptness in one of the juleps that Reuben is bringing us." He raised his voice. "Right here on the table, Reuben, please."

Whipple looked up, startled. He had not heard the soft approach of the butler over the grass but his host's ear must have caught the sound instantly. He sat back as the man set out a little table and placed on it a decanter and frosted glasses. Far beyond him, far beyond the roof of the house that showed over the Negro's shoulder, the valley was peaceful in the sunshine, still streaked with the mysterious brownish plumes. As the butler edged the table close to the major's chair he said in a low voice, "Been out front, suh. Low, thick cloud a-comin' from the west."

Penhallow inclined his head. "Thank you, Reuben." The butler drifted silently away.

Whipple frowned and looked at the sky. The sun burned hard against unspotted dense blue. "Clouds?" he asked.

Penhallow waved at the tray. "Do you mind serving yourself, Mr. Sheldon? Your health, sir, and the Union." He sipped, set down his glass. "Yes, clouds."

"But the sky's perfectly clear," objected Whipple.

"Yes. But Reuben didn't invent anything. This is something that you ought to know in your present work. Really, it's a very simple matter, reading Reuben's clouds. Merely a question of using your eyes—or in my case using someone else's. You must have had a fine view of the valley as you drove round the mountain. You saw nothing, Mr. Sheldon?"

"What could I see?" asked Whipple. "A town or two. A lot of trees and a few patches of dust."

"Patches which, if you kept on looking on them, would turn into clouds—moving clouds. Suppose that you were taking your battery into position and saw a cloud or a pall of dust on the horizon in the direction of your fire, what would you think about it?"

Whipple rubbed his square chin. "I'm beginning to follow. I'd say troops on the march."

"And that would only be the start. What kind of troops? How many? What's their line of march and formation?"

"Oh, well, you could hardly say that unless you rode up close enough to see."

The major smiled. "We're quite close enough. Far ahead of the clouds we see, there's another. It's higher and thinner, it moves rather faster." His shielded eyes turned toward Whipple. "You *still* can't interpret it? What *could* make low, thick clouds? Infantry, sir! Their dust rises slowly and hangs low and thick. Four clouds would mean four companies. And our high, thin cloud is, of course, cavalry. They're not bunched so much and hoofs shoot up finer dust than boots, dust that goes higher and thinner. Now take wheeled vehicles. Wheels and hoofs and a greater distance between elements. That'll give you a thick, broken cloud that for height and density will be somewhere between infantry and cavalry. I can't tell you what you saw, coming round the mountain. But Reuben's report just now means that infantry is moving east across the valley. That makes two regiments in the last two days. If I hear of more and more, then I can guess that as much as a brigade is moving to the railroad. And news like that is worth a little risk to get north. It's

not much of a contribution to my country, but I like to feel that it's something."

"It's a very big contribution," said Whipple. "Everything that you and people like you have done is big. What do you suppose the clouds mean? I've had the feeling for some days that there's big stuff afoot but I just can't run it down."

Penhallow pursed his lips judicially. "I think you're right. I've had the same feeling. Let's consider what we do know—which is mighty little. Some troops seem to be moving east. That may be routine. It may be a feint. But if a lot of them keep moving—ah, that would be different."

Whipple ruffled his dark hair. "I think, Major, that my time around Mobile was badly spent. I ought to have been in this area."

"Not here. We're a little off the beaten track. You ought to go north and east. If there's a heavy movement, some troops will have to go by road. Others will be shunted on that northeast branch line that runs from Montgomery to Jacksonville and detrain there. Still others will ride the main line through Montgomery on to Opelika and Atlanta. Know anyone up in the northeast part of Alabama whom you could visit?"

Whipple nodded. "I want to look at the rolling mills and factories at Anniston. I've a letter to the manager of the mills."

"No," said Penhallow slowly, "you ought to go beyond the end of the line. Then you'd see the troops who'd come over the road and those who came by rail as far as Jacksonville."

"I've got a standing invitation from a Mr. Maury Jervis who lives quite a bit beyond the end of the line."

"Maury Jervis? Capital—so far as location goes. But he's as Confederate as a cotton boll."

"So are most of my intimates," said Whipple briefly.

"Of course, of course. It has to be so. Tell me, Mr. Sheldon, have you had any grounds for worry other than normal, which must be colossal?"

"In most cases, things seem to go almost too smoothly. Still, there's one man who always seems to be watching me. He's a good-looking man who doesn't seem to be doing much of anything—languid in manner to the point of seeming lazy. His name's John St. John."

Penhallow waved the notion aside. "That's old Mallory St. John's

son. I know all about him. He's just what he seems. He's Confederate, but he's typical of a small group who seem to hold themselves above the war. You may have heard the saying — 'Broadcloth won't fight so long as there's homespun.' In other words, let the aristocracy rule and the poor man fight. That's Johnny St. John right down to the ground. No, if I were you, I'd watch the ones who seem least suspicious and forget about him. And by all means, go to see Maury Jervis."

"I'll write him from Montgomery. And — thanks to you — if I do see anything in that neck of the woods, it will mean something to me now."

"And there's more, Mr. Sheldon. If you can, get close to columns on the march or — perhaps better still — to roads they've passed over."

There was a great deal more, an endless catalogue of signs which could be read by the initiate. A mule's print was longer and narrower than a horse's, and from that difference much could be deduced since mules and horses bear different burdens and fill different functions. The width of wheel tracks, the depth and number of ruts, held a mine of information. Which way did a column go? Look for a hole in the road; a wheel passing over it leaves a deeper mark on the side *last* hit. Loaded wagons leave a deeper track than empty ones. Tired animals shuffle along while fresh ones pick up their feet cleanly. What is the morale of troops that have passed by? Look for the ground where they have halted or camped. If they have left a filthy litter, if they have straggled off to wells and orchards — as their prints will show — then discipline and morale are probably quite low. Examine foot marks, which will tell if the men are well or poorly shod, and what they can do may well depend on the state of their boots.

Whipple's head was buzzing by the time the carriage arrived to take him to the train. He rose regretfully. "You've done a lot for me, Major. If I use what you've given me properly, you've done a lot for the Union."

Penhallow stood beside him. "I? I've done nothing." He sighed. "Yours is the hard life, Mr. Sheldon."

Whipple shrugged. "It looks worse than it is. The hardest part — well, that's being with people like Judge Quigley or Broad or that

QM major at Mobile — people you like and whom you try to make like you, and all the time you're on the other side."

The major turned his sightless eyes toward the house. "I know a little about that. I was raised in the South. I live in the South. I believe in slavery. Most of my old friends are sure that I believe in it far beyond my belief in the Union. I have to keep them thinking that way. All my old friends." His voice dropped lower. "Even my two grandsons, Mr. Sheldon. They're with Robert Lee in Virginia."

"That's far more than's asked of me," said Whipple.

"Not at all! How else *can* people live who believe as I do? We believe in the Union and there's an end of all uncertainty. You're young. You grew up when the Union was a fact accepted by most people, not a fact to be fought for. My generation knew the world when our country was, in many minds, a very shaky theory. It's hard, sometimes, to be able to do nothing that's real. I see my neighbors, my lifelong friends, turning from the Union and — " He squared his old shoulders. "But it's thoughtless of me to dwell on this to someone who's actually facing things. Good-by, Mr. Sheldon, and God bless you."

"Good-by, Major. You don't know how much strength you've given me."

Two sacks of mail had come in to the battery and Tom Madden sat on a stack of oat bags in the stable tent, bent over a letter from his father. It had been written from the office and the letterhead — "The Trust Company of the Scioto Valley" — stood out boldly above the thick pen strokes.

. . . and we're doing through the bank all we can for the families of the men who were so barbarously hanged. My dear boy, what a narrow escape you had! Your mother and I feel deeply that the hand of Providence must have protected you through all those weeks.

I have read all your letters, since your escape, to your mother and Aunt Tabitha, although I have skipped those parts dealing with Miss McDaniel. No doubt it was necessary, but they would find it hard to understand how a young lady, as she seems to be from your account, could possibly travel about the country with only male escort. I confess that I find it hard to accept.

All the news, except from your area, is most disappointing. Perhaps

bringing Halleck to Washington and putting Pope in command in Virginia will change things. At least we can thank God that we have a great and a good man in the White House. I must close now, my dear boy. We are all most proud of you and of what you have done. I enclose herewith an order for fifty dollars.

Your affectionate father,
MARCUS MADDEN

Tom reread the letter slowly, then tucked it and the order into his breast pocket and lay back against the sacks.

Where was Sharon? She had been close by his elbow when the train stopped by Kinnyard's camp. He had looked around and she was gone. "God damn this war!" he thought. "Always snaking people away when you want to see them. Whip's probably on some job where he can't let me know, but Sharon could have sent a line at least." A sudden pang of fear struck him. She, too, might have been out on a job and been nabbed by the Rebs!

He shook off the thought as he got to his feet and brushed oat dust from his new triple stripes. In some ways the war wasn't so bad after all. He had his own section now and knew that Kinnyard was pleased with his handling of it. Of course, it was only a caisson section, the Fifth, but the next move would surely give him a gun section. Yes, his section was good and he had two first-rate caisson corporals under him.

Out by the picket line where the horses turned their tails to the hot slant of the sun, someone called his name. He answered, "That you, Oats?"

The stable sergeant lounged up to the tent. "Who the hell you think? What you been doin' there? Go on and dust yourself off and flag your tail up to Kinn's tent. He's lookin' for you."

"What's he want?"

The stable sergeant tucked a fresh quid into his leathery cheek. "Heard he's fresh out of stripes and wants to lift them new ones off'n your sleeve."

"Yeah? Well, he sure couldn't take yours. You don't know enough to be a high private so he's just plumb stuck with you."

The stable sergeant spat complacently at a grasshopper. "Don't fret 'bout my stripes, Tom. They're basted on with haywire. Better get along to Kinn now. And start peelin' them stripes as you go."

Trim and cool-looking in a braided jacket of dark blue cotton, Alastair Kinnyard sat back of a low table in the tent that looked down the battery street. Tom came to attention at the entrance and saluted.

Kinnyard sat back in his camp chair and nodded pleasantly. "At ease, Sergeant. Come in here and take that other chair. I've got a question or two for you."

Tom uncovered and drew up a chair that was ingeniously fashioned from an old beer keg. Kinnyard turned a pencil slowly between his thin, strong fingers. "Who's your best caisson corporal?" he asked.

"That's hard to say, sir. Red Harriman's better with horses and Joe Boley with men."

Kinnyard smoothed his imperial. "Not much to choose? Then we'll give Harriman his third stripe. He's senior. *And* we'll give him the Fifth Section." He picked up an official envelope. "I've got good news here for you. Likewise for myself. This Andrews business made quite a stir at home. The Legislature at Columbus voted commissions to all of you. Second loot. A highly emotional gesture and in some cases I doubt its wisdom. Not in yours." He held out his hand. "Congratulations, Tom. You'll have the Third and Fourth Platoons."

Tom shook hands uncertainly as though hardly taking in the news. "Well!" he said. "They didn't need to do that."

"As I say, it's sheer emotionalism but I benefit by it. I've been trying to get officers but I don't seem to know the right people at Columbus. Now I've got two — or will have when young Sheldon gets back."

Tom sat up. "Back from where?"

"From wherever he is," said Kinnyard blandly, twirling his mustache. "Now you better go into Huntsville and see what you can pick up by way of adornment, suitable to rank. Move your personal stuff into the empty tent next mine."

Tom shook his head as though trying to settle his thought. "Gosh, I'd never figured on all this. I hoped maybe some day you'd give me a gun section. Two platoons! Say! Dad'll be delighted."

"He probably knows already. This came over the wire. We've got to work like the devil, Tom. Things look quiet but I don't trust

appearances. Forrest's loose with his cavalry clear up into Kentucky and something's brewing around the Cumberland Gap."

"Action?" asked Tom quickly. "That ought to mean that Old Stars Mitchel is coming back."

Kinnyard shook his head, frowning. "I wish it did. But so far as this whole theater's concerned, he's out. Out for good."

"He can't be!" exclaimed Tom. "Why, he was the mainspring!"

"I know," sighed Kinnyard. "But every time he was ready to do something, Buell or Halleck said 'Wait a minute,' and then went ahead and spoiled all his work. Mitchel had as much as he could stand and then sent in his resignation. He really had no choice, as I see it. It'll be in orders in a day or two."

The corners of Tom's mouth sagged. "The boys trusted Old Stars. Who's taking his place—or trying to?"

"Lovell Rousseau."

"Never heard of him," said Tom glumly.

"You will. He's a mighty good man, a Kentucky Unionist who did a lot keeping his state from seceding. You must have seen him riding around here. A big, good-looking man with a jaw like a bulldog and eyes that drill right through you."

"Big, is he? He'll have to show the boys he's more than just a thick slab of beef."

"He will. He's good in action and looks after his men. I regret Mitchel as much as you do, but if we had to lose him we're lucky to get Rousseau. Better go along to Huntsville now. There'll be papers for you to sign at HQ in the courthouse. If you need money, I'll advance it."

With crisp new bills buttoned into his jacket, Tom hopped a handcar. A brisk wind from the west had driven the blanket of damp heat out of the valley of the Tennessee, and off to the south the last rays of the sun lay bright on the crest of tree-crowned Monte Sano ridge. At the outskirts of Huntsville he left the handcar and walked briskly down Green Street to the courthouse where he ran up the steps and through the door over which the numerals "1816" were carved deep in stone. A new-lit lamp threw a pool of light in the crowded corridor. Tom heard a low exclamation of surprise and looked down into Sharon's anxious eyes. He held out both hands. "Where on earth have you been?"

A quick glow flooded him as Sharon gripped his fingers tightly. "Tom!" she said. "Where's Whip?"

He stared at her, disconcerted. "Why, I—I thought you might know."

Her face under the little chip bonnet was turned up to him. Lamp-light fell across her high cheekbones, across her eyes that were dark with anxiety. He said gently, "I don't know any more than you do."

She shook his hands impatiently. "Then find out. He was in your battery."

He turned her toward the door and laid an arm about her shoulders. "Let's get out of here, out on the steps."

She walked silently beside him but when he stopped she faced him again. "Go to General Rousseau. Go to your captain. Somebody knows."

"Only the people who are supposed to and I'm not one of them. My guess, and it's only a guess, is that he's off on some job."

Sharon twisted a handkerchief between her fingers. "I'm sure that Penn knows. I saw her last week. But she just won't say anything."

"Sh!" said Tom. "People will hear you." He eyed a stout colored woman who stepped through the door and stood close by them.

"That's Faith. She belongs to Mrs. Ingalls where I stay when I'm here. Tom—you don't think anything—anything's happened to Whip?"

"You know him. He'll be all right wherever he is. I'm not worrying about him, Sharon, but I have been about you. What happened to you when you left the car?"

Her eyes widened. "Worrying about me? I've been all right. When we came into camp that time and I saw all your friends waiting for you—why, I just thought I'd get out on the other side. I could see Mrs. Ingalls's carriage waiting by the sheds. That's all."

"You could have let me know."

"But I did write Whip. He would have told you."

"But Whip—" A passing cavalryman jostled him, mumbled an apology. "Lord, this is no place to talk. Where are you going now?"

"Back to Mrs. Ingalls. I come here to show myself to the provost once a week. General Mitchel said it was a good idea."

"Let me walk home with you."

Her smooth forehead wrinkled. "Oh—I don't know. Yes. Yes. It's

a good idea. People will think you're from the provost, making sure that I really go home. Come along, Faith."

They went along the wooden sidewalk under spreading elms. Tom said, "I did try to find you, Sharon. No one seemed to know anything about you."

"I must have been in Knoxville. It's awful up there. I had to stand by and cheer when they dragged a poor little man off to jail because he had a Union flag hidden in his house. People were so violent. It made me worry about Whip all the more."

"Now listen, Sharon. You know Whip can take care of himself."

Her voice dropped, almost as though she were talking to herself. "He found me in the mountains. He was the first man I met whom I could really rely on since — since Father's death." She walked on a few steps in silence. Then she laid a gloved hand on his arm. "Tom, do you think Whip's pretty fond of Penn?"

"Penn? Oh, he likes you both all right."

"Likes us all right," she said mechanically. "He never said anything to you — well, never mind. Here's Mrs. Ingalls's house, back of the tall hedge. You can go in now, Faith." Faith waddled up a side path. Sharon said, "Good night, Tom."

He caught her hands. "Look — you're not slipping away like this!"

She looked pleadingly up at him. "I don't know how to say this. I just — just can't explain —"

"I see," said Tom slowly. "I'm just Whip's friend."

She twisted her hands. "I didn't say that at all. Oh, Tom — didn't Whip ever say anything to you about me?"

He hesitated, then said, "I can tell you this. Whip was mostly concerned in seeing that *you* got down here safely. That was on his mind all the time. If he didn't — well, think an awful lot of you, he wouldn't have been so centered on that."

"I wonder," said Sharon thoughtfully. She laid her hand on the gate. "I must go in now. Do send word when you hear about Whip. Good night, and thanks for seeing me home."

He heard her light step going up the walk and she was humming to herself, humming the pidgin-German song that Whip had sung at Swims's and on the ride down to safety. "So lift up your glass, mine modter, und lift up yours, Gretchen, mine dear . . ." He sighed and moved off.

P A R T V I

Marooned

MAURY JERVIS's great house, with its curving drives and widespread gardens, perched on a bold promontory that jutted northeast into the valley of the Coosa. As Whipple alighted from the carriage that had brought him from the distant Jacksonville station, his host, short, fat, and clean-shaven, emerged on the eastern terrace, beaming and rubbing his hands. "Now this is a real pleasure, Mr. Sherston! Have a good trip?"

Whipple shook hands warmly. "It's a great pleasure to be here, sir, and the trip was most comfortable, thanks. But it would be worth crossing Hudson's Bay in midwinter to get a glimpse of this." He gestured toward the darkening Coosa Valley. The sun was setting behind the ridge on which the house was built and its slanting rays still kept a lingering touch on the ranges to the north and east while the bottom lands and the twisting Coosa sank away in a lavender mist.

Jervis's beam broadened. "So you like it, do you? We've always thought it beat anything else in the whole South — and of course in the North."

"It's marvelous," agreed Whipple. It was too late, of course, to hope for any great sign of troop movements but the coming days would show him traces of the smallest units over an amazingly wide area. Roads were largely hidden in thick woods, but dust clouds would rise high above the trees. Valleys in the middle distance were screened by low ridges, but plumes would drift above them, would be silhouetted against the looming masses of the far horizon.

"Now you'll want a drink or two after your ride on the cars, but first here's a fellow guest whom we're fortunate enough to have with us." Jervis turned toward the house and Whipple, following his move, felt a sudden warning shock run through him.

Out of the nearest French window, immaculate and languid as

ever, stepped John St. John, his thin, handsome face with its small black mustache and goatee expressing the laziest interest compatible with good manners. Jervis called jovially, "Our Canadian friend, John. Mr. Sherston, Mr. St. John."

St. John held out a lackadaisical hand, drawling, "We've met before, Maury. Odd, isn't it, Mr. Sherston, how our paths seem to cross?"

"Let's say that it's I who have been lucky," said Whipple.

A hint of a smile showed under St. John's slim mustache. "Perhaps that should be my claim, rather than yours," he said. "Maury, if we're to change before dinner, I'll need a drink and then another." Hands in his pockets, he lounged away toward the edge of the terrace, apparently oblivious to both host and guest.

Whipple carefully refrained from looking after him. "Damn it, if he's going to be here right along, I'll have to go so easy I could walk along a cobweb without busting it," he thought. "Hell with it! He's probably all right. I'm just getting the shakes."

Late the next afternoon he sat in a cane chair close by the terrace wall. He sipped his drink with outward unconcern but inwardly he was filled with a deep sense of completion, of fulfillment that goes far deeper than mere satisfaction, a feeling that even the presence of St. John, close at his elbow, could not dispel. Out there in the valley that was bright and sharp in the setting sun, dust banners floated in the still air, trailed away through wood roads or hung in drab bands beyond the low ridges or along the reddening sparkle of the Coosa. And each banner told its story. Three miles away, along the right bank of the river where trees hid the road, a whole brigade of infantry threw its sign manual to the skies. On a ridge to the left, three batteries of field artillery wound north and east, every wheel, gun barrel, horse, and man hidden by dense woods where the telltale cloud hung.

Jervis clumped out of the house, bald pate shining. "Must be a sight of troops off there, Mr. Sherston. How'd you like to drive down the valley and have a squint at them?"

Whipple lit a small cigar. "I'd like to. But — well, being a for-eigner, I think it's wiser to stay away from things like that."

St. John drawled, "That's mighty thoughtful of you," and smiled back of his little mustache.

"Just what you people call 'horse sense,'" said Whipple. He laughed lightly. "Besides, I must confess I don't know a cannon from a battalion. Mr. Jervis, I don't think I've ever seen a finer panorama than this. See how a whole new set of greens has come out in the last few minutes. And that round hill off there — it's almost black."

Jervis looked deeply gratified. "I'm glad you like it. After dinner I must show you a sketch from this very spot. It was done by my grandfather when the land was first opened. Now that round hill you spoke of — you'll see that there are several — you mean the one that shows through the sharp gap to the south?"

"No. More to the right. The one where that battery is heading north." He narrowed his eyes as he studied the hill. Three miles and more away. He tried to calculate the various factors. Trees, on the average, could be taken as about thirty feet in height. A lone pine in a clearing beyond the wood road gave him that measurement. Thirty feet or ten yards. A limbered gun or caisson with a six-horse hitch took up about twenty-five yards of road space. He mentally gauged the gaps between the slow-rising clouds. A six-gun battery with probably four extra caissons. Then there was a longer gap, corresponding roughly to three times the length of the pine. Another series of clouds followed, a series that must mean another battery or combat train observing its thirty-yard distance from the leading formation. He'd be able to tell in a moment if it were more guns or transport.

St. John's voice slid languidly through his calculations. "Now I'd like right well to know just how you can say that that's a battery out yonder."

Whipple sank slowly back into his chair, trying to hide the cold shock of his own indiscretion. He flicked ash from his cigar with fingers he hoped were steady. His voice sounded thick and muffled as he answered. "A random shot. The sun struck the hillside and I fancied I caught a glint of metal through the trees." The very act of speaking gave him fresh confidence. "The glint seemed too dull for bayonets or lances." He managed a smile. "Not bad reasoning for a rank amateur, was it?"

Jervis said, "I'd call it plumb inspired for an amateur."

"Or for a seasoned hand," said St. John, reaching for his glass.

"Oh, no," laughed Jervis, "we can't spoil Mr. Sherston that way. A seasoned observer would have said 'swords.' Our cavalry doesn't carry lances, Mr. Sherston."

Whipple waved away the objection. "But I couldn't be expected to know that."

St. John negligently tossed away his cigar butt. "You have many lancer regiments in Canada, then?"

Whipple's mind clung desperately to the north shore of Ontario as he spun his glass idly in his hands. "Oh, I'm no military expert. We let the Crown see to things like that. I suppose Her Majesty's army has lances, or else we wouldn't have the word 'lancer.' Come to think of it, I remember now that we did raise some lancer companies, or whatever you call them, back in '37. My father used to talk about them. They were used to hunt down William Lyon Mackenzie's scum."

"Mackenzie?" asked Jervis. "I don't think I ever heard of him."

"My congratulations," said Whipple dryly. "We heard altogether too much. He was, well, sort of a Canadian John Brown — although that's flattering Mackenzie." As Whipple unrolled the tragic story, sheltered himself behind it, his eyes strayed over the valley and its growing streamers of dust that stood out, separate and distinct, or melted into the next and the next.

When the three left the terrace to change for dinner, Whipple went directly to his room that looked out to the great eastern sweep whose cool-scented air poured in through his windows. Along the glimmer of the Coosa, lights began to twinkle as troops bivouacked for the night. He studied the scene and came to a sudden decision. His riddle was solved. The new commander, Bragg, was beyond all question moving the entire Army of Mississippi clear across Alabama, and its one goal, heading as it did, was Chattanooga. There Bragg could join hands with Kirby Smith, who would work out of Knoxville, and strike at Buell's great but scattered force. He turned various alternatives over in his mind but always came back to the same answer and the same decision.

The news must go north and at once. Yet how? How could he leave without arousing instant suspicion, since his invitation had another twenty-four hours to run?

He leafed through his papers hurriedly, studied a letter or two

carefully, and decided on his course. He would pack at once, face Jervis with as plausible a story as he could, and ask to be driven to the evening south train. If St. John were lounging about, he would have to face the matter out as best he could. He packed rapidly and walked boldly out of his room with his grip. The corridor was empty and the broad, polished stairs gave out no creak under his step.

Whipple's confidence increased as he saw a good many servants, sure sign that there were no guests about, busy with last-minute tasks.

He heard the dry splutter of a match from a small room by the front door. He dropped his grip and stepped toward it. Maury Jervis sat by a desk, contentedly drawing on a cigar as he examined an account book. He looked up with a genial grin that changed to blank bewilderment as he saw Whipple dressed for traveling.

Whipple said quickly. "Mr. Jervis, I—I really find myself in a quandary. I don't quite know how to broach the subject."

Jervis was on his feet at once. "Just you sit right down and tell me about it. How may I serve you?"

Whipple sat down and lit a cigar with abrupt, jerky motions as though deeply embarrassed. "It's all my own confounded stupidity. You see, in my eagerness to be here with you, I got off from Montgomery in a great hurry. I read my mail most hastily and only just now realized, through looking at a letter that fell out of my pocket, that I'd misread a date in it. Colonel Brazier in Mobile had set an entirely different day to go into the matter of artillery harness than I had supposed. His clerk's 'five' did look rather like an 'eight,' but even so—" he shrugged—"I don't say that's an excuse for my stupidity. Having made the error—and as the matter is not a private one, but really concerns your government—why, as I say, I'm in a quandary."

Jervis nodded gravely. "I've heard the complaint before—about the caliber of our clerks. It's going to land us in bad trouble if we're not more careful. Of course there's no question of what you must do. You're acting most correctly." He looked past Whipple's shoulder. "Don't you agree, John?"

Whipple repressed a start as St. John strolled silently into the room, drawling, "How could I differ from my host? Of course, I only heard the last of what Mr. Sherston said, but why doesn't he

place himself in one spot and make people come to him, instead of running about the country after *them*? That's what I'd do."

Jervis reached for a bellpull. "I'm sure that Mr. Sherston knows his business," he said a little stiffly.

St. John smiled blandly. "I'm not questioning that in the least."

"Of course not. Now I'll have the carriage around at once, Mr. Sherston. I'll have a hamper of food packed for you, because you won't be able to find a thing till you get to Montgomery."

"That's thoughtful of you, Maury," murmured St. John. "Still, I feel that you underestimate Mr. Sherston's talents."

An hour later Whipple boarded the south-bound train. He was free for the moment. And there was comfort to be derived from the last glimpse of the house with Jervis waving and St. John leaning against the door in fathomless languor. The next step was to get his news north. He had been given one sure, quick means of transmission, to be used only in the utmost emergency. So far, other than identifying himself, he had carefully refrained from taking advantage of it. Now he felt completely justified.

He reached Montgomery in the early morning, stiff, dusty, and depressed. Clinging to his bag he crossed the junction tracks to a shack masquerading as a hotel and drank coffee in a room where the air was thick with flies and heavy with rancid heat. When a bell clanged to announce the up train he stepped out into air that was only a degree fresher and cooler than the fusty dining room and boarded the train from the side farthest from the main platform. As he peered through the smeared windows of the last car, he dropped quickly to a seat across the aisle, queasy shivers running through him. For that one glance had shown him a rickety shed and into it had stepped a tall man, as though seeking cover until the last minute. And that man, despite the catlike alertness of his motions, looked distressingly like Mr. John St. John.

From his seat, where he huddled low, Whipple watched the shed. The train started unexpectedly, began its slow, puffing progress, gathered speed. No one came out of the shed. Slowly Whipple sat up. "God damn it, I'm getting the hypo. That couldn't be St. John. I made the train at Jacksonville without much time to spare and I know I left him nailed to Jervis's door."

Reason made him feel still more certain. No, it couldn't have been

possible. Or wait! The chill of fear again. How about that long, unscheduled stop at Talladega? The train could have been held by telegraphic orders while St. John caught up by handcar or special locomotive. He could have boarded another car without Whipple noticing it. But then — why didn't he act at Montgomery? There were provost guards on the platform and St. John's name carried enough weight in Alabama to bring about at least the questioning of the best-vouched-for people. There could be only one answer. The half-glimpsed man was not John St. John. Q.E.D.

A slight haze covered the sky and the sun paled as noon came on. At a plank-walled station marked Plantation Knob, where the air lay in stagnant pools, Whipple jumped to his feet, caught up his grip, made for the door. The platform was empty. He stepped into the station.

Behind a railed-off space, a short, immensely fat man crouched froglike over a telegraph instrument. He was in his shirt sleeves and perspired gently as though it were some endless, natural process like breathing. His big, clean-shaven face remained expressionless as he saw Whipple. His thick lips parted enough to say, "You!"

"None other, Mr. Malley. Can you reach our lines?"

"If you got something heavy enough to send."

Malley's fat hand reached toward the instrument, touched it with surprising delicacy and sureness, like a skilled pianist. The key began to click. Malley crouched even lower, his eyes vacant on the opposite wall as though concentrating all his senses in his finger tips. Whipple's ear became attuned to the staccato chatter. He asked abruptly, "How's it possible to get right through to our lines?"

Eyes still vacant, Malley said, "The wire's bust to hell 'bout where our territory ends and Reb begins, but we've got a few boys who'll cut in at the break and link us up every now and then. I've talked clear through to Bill Moss up in Nashville. It ain't too safe, though. Most of the ops between here and the break are red-hot Rebs. I tell you, mister, there's times I can't look at a wire. Too much like a noosed rope a-coilin' toward me." He paused, eyes more vacant than ever. "Got it," he said in a flat voice.

Whipple stared eagerly. "You're through?"

"Yup. That's Joe Patterson, all right. Sends smooth as a greased eel."

"How about other operators listening in along the line?"

Malley shot tobacco juice unerringly into a box of sawdust. "Hell, us old-timers, we all got codes we use. They wouldn't pay it no mind. Next station up the line'll just figger I'm sending to the next beyond and so on."

"Where's Patterson?"

"At the other end of the wire." He raised his head. "All right. What's your freight?"

"Ready? Then send this. Put it any way you like. Bragg is shifting the entire Army of Mississippi to Chattanooga."

"Is he, now!" said Malley calmly as he began to send. The key stuttered on and on.

"Need to say all that?"

"Just adding stuff of my own. Scenery, you might call it. That's all. Joe acknowledging. He's—huh?" He bent closer as the instrument went dead, then took up its clamor once more. "Hell's a-risin'! That's Sandy Ruffing, twenty mile up the line. The—oh-oh—the super's at his elbow. Says—" he grinned somberly—"says for me to quit shootin' dirty stories over the company wire." He tapped out a brief acknowledgment and pushed back from the table.

"If I have something else really big, will you handle it for me?" asked Whipple.

"Leave it with me and it'll get through sometime. Only—" he raised a pudgy finger. "Don't be too sure you'll find this shebang open. It's one hell of a small place for an operator. Wouldn't be one here at all if they hadn't figured on a big cavalry depot back in the hills and opened this station for it. Then the camp idea went bust and someone forgot to cancel this place. But someone might remember to. And another thing. Since that feller, Andrews, went a-hellin' down into Georgia, things has got tougher." He turned his vague eyes on Whipple. "Got word down the line that you might mebbe know something about that Georgia stuff."

"A lot of people know something about it," said Whipple. "How soon do you think Mitchel'll get that message?"

Malley's fat-circled eyes widened. "Why, I'd say he'd get it about the time he reads it in the papers. Jumpin' goats! Mitchel's been out near three weeks. Lovell Rousseau's took his place. For permanent. He—hey, what's the matter with you? Seen a haunt or something?"

Reach in that drawer and wrap yourself round some bourbon."

"You're sure about Mitchel?" said Whipple thickly.

"Ample. Powerful ample."

Whipple walked toward the door. He felt dizzy and his mind refused to work. Mitchel *gone*? But it was to Mitchel that he was to report. The general must have tried to get word to him and some link in the chain had broken, leaving the message undelivered. What to do now? Actually, he had no assignment. His chief concern must be to get back to Union territory as soon as possible. But how? The route north was shortest, but probably the most dangerous. Or how about going direct from Mobile to New Orleans? That was possible so long as his Canadian disguise held good. His mind shaped these questions automatically but gave out no answer.

Dimly he heard Malley call, "Hey, come over here and get a drink!"

Or supposing he stayed, kept on working? The very reception of his news at the mysterious other end of the wire indicated that someone, somewhere, was taking charge of messages. But the big news was in. There might not be enough to add to it to justify the risk.

The key started its clackety-clack once more. Whipple turned instinctively toward it. Malley muttered, "What the hell! Joe Patterson again. What the devil's he talkin' about?" The noise stopped and Malley wiped his forehead. "Hell's c'toot! I've heard of well-done beef and well-done pork, but God damn me if — this mean anything to you? 'Well-done pen'?"

A picture came sharp in Whipple's mind, a picture of a brown-haired girl in gray on a veranda, saying "Well done!" as he had struggled to phrase a comment on the hanging of the raiders, while Judge Quigley and his guests watched him.

Whipple was back at the table in one stride. "That means plenty! Things'll be popping and I'm sure to have more stuff to send up the line. The down train's due in half an hour and —"

Somewhere off in the south, a locomotive whistled. Malley lurched around in his chair. "What the hell's that?"

"Must be an up train," said Whipple.

"Ain't any. It's —" The instrument clacked harshly and Malley swung back to it. The corners of his thick mouth sagged and his eyes narrowed. "Godamighty! Here's a touch I don't know. Sends

slobbier'n hell-beatin' tanbark." He listened intently, then got to his feet, waddled across the room, and shrugged into a shabby coat.

"What's the matter?" asked Whipple.

"Ample." Malley pulled a half-empty bottle from a drawer and stuffed it into his pocket while the instrument clattered on. "Talk pretty to your feet, friend. You're goin' to need 'em. We're leavin'."

"Why?"

The locomotive hooted again from the south, nearer and nearer. "That's why," said Malley. "That whistle may be hollerin' 'R-o-opel Ro-o-opel! Bend them knees. We're travelin'."

The fat man pushed out through a rear door with surprising agility, Whipple close behind him. Soon they were across a bare, sandy stretch and into the pine woods where stinging flies droned toward them. Over his shoulder Malley panted, "Ain't got to go far."

"What news did you get?" asked Whipple, sweating under the weight of his grip.

"Something bad's comin' up the line. Wish I knew who was sendin' back there."

He toiled on through light underbrush, wound up an unexpected slope that the tall pines hid. It was capped with a bush-filled clearing. Malley dropped heavily to the ground, motioned Whipple to lie beside him. Whipple sank among scratchy branches while clouds of mosquitoes hummed delightedly about him.

The spot was well chosen. Through the scrub growth Whipple could look down onto the tracks and the station, not fifty yards away. Malley wiped his face on his sleeve. "If it's all right, we'll go back. If it ain't, we'll take that track on the other side of the hill. There's right sort of people in a cabin two mile on who'll hide us good if so's we hone to get hid." He sank lower and Whipple followed his example.

Over the trees to the right, dense clouds of smoke rolled lazily upward, the whistle screeched again. Into the field of vision bowled a single locomotive. Whipple gently parted the bushes in front of him, stared out.

There were men in gray in the cab, a few more clinging to the tender. There were no cars. Somehow Whipple felt that the presence of this single unit with its uniformed men was something that he had expected. Nor was he surprised to see John St. John drop to the

station platform as the wheels stopped. An officer with loop on loop of gold braid on his sleeves joined him. By some means St. John had left Jarvis immediately after Whipple, had had the authority to hold the down train at Talladega while he overtook it somehow. Later, something must have gone wrong with his plans, or he would surely have acted at Montgomery.

There was nothing languid about St. John as he darted into the station. Whipple could hear him calling sharply to the officer, to the men who dropped from cab and tender. Malley nudged him. "Know that feller? He someone you'd kind of like to talk to?"

"Not much," said Whipple, watching the station. "Who's the officer? Ever seen him before?"

Malley wriggled cautiously forward. "Ain't easy to tell from here. Wait a minute. There he is, out on the platform. It's — sure God it's Stoddard Johnston, Colonel Stoddard Johnston. Brother, someone wants to see you mighty bad. They'd never send Johnston up to say 'Howdy' to *me*."

Whipple studied the erect, uniformed man standing there in the sun. "I've heard of him. He runs Bragg's secret service. What do you figure they'll do now?"

"They got to haul pretty quick. Be a south-bound comin' and they ain't a sidin' short of two mile up. Yup! There they go."

The engine began to roll on north and Whipple drew a breath of relief that was quickly checked as he saw that the cab was empty save for engineer and fireman. St. John and Johnston and the guards were merely sending the locomotive to the safety of the siding. St. John was apparently still inside the station. Johnston, on the platform, was beckoning to the guards, who came out into the sun. One of them faced the woods and began bawling, "Malley! Whar t'hell are you? Malley! Malley!"

"Friend of yours?" Whipple asked dryly.

"Sure. We growed up in different towns together. Must have got my name down the line."

"We better keep on being different, then," said Whipple. "Let's hit for that cabin you told me about."

"Good idea," said Malley, without stirring. His eyes had the same vacant look that Whipple had seen when messages were coming over the wire.

Whipple nudged him. "Come on. You lead the way." Malley still lay inert. Whipple shook his shoulder. "For God's sake can't you see what Johnston's up to? There! St. John's joined him. They're going to send the men out to make casts through the woods."

Malley levered himself to his feet. "Smart, ain't they? Now this trail's easy to find. Begins just over the top of this hill. Head straight along it. The cabin b'longs to Pout Swayme."

Whipple rose, brushing twigs and dead leaves from his clothes. "You don't have to make a speech about it."

Malley looked reproachfully at him. "How the hell you get there if I don't orate some? Tote your grip and keep totin'." He dragged the bottle from his pocket, took a long gulp, then slopped about a half-pint over the front of his shirt. "Me, I'm goin' down an' play with John the Baptist and Johnston."

Whipple caught his arm. "The hell you are. You're coming with me."

"Now don't start your guts churnin'," admonished Malley. "Ain't I said he ain't interested in *me*? The worst he can do is report me drunk on duty. I'm goin' down there and you ain't stoppin' me. There's your choice. Hit for Swayme's or stay here and let them boys down there play with your brains a mite. Five minutes start for you, a cussin' out'n Johnston for me." He took another swig at his bottle and rocked off down through the trees and brush. Whipple stared after him, helpless.

Malley was out of sight among the trees, but through the hot air, maudlin tones echoed back to Whipple. "Eee-yow!" Then hoarse song.

Wake up, Jacob, day's a-breakin',
Pease in de pot an' de hoe-cake bakin' —

Reluctantly, Whipple turned on his heel and started for the track that Malley had described. It was hard, for the moment, to see what his course would be from Swayme's. One thing was clear. His usefulness in the Alabama theater was done, finished. But that did not mean that all usefulness was at an end. He knew that secret service and intelligence work in the Confederate armies was about as loosely and carelessly organized as in the Union. Possibly more so. Bragg and Johnston, for example, would carry on that phase of their work

without reference to other commands; they would share nothing and receive nothing, except by the rankest chance. It was quite possible that Whipple would be safe working in the area commanded by Kirby Smith, even though Bragg's army joined Smith's. But there would be little to be learned up there. His safest, and at the same time most productive, field might well be farther to the west where Sterling Price and Earl Van Dorn were watching Grant and Sherman. He was not sure of Price, but he had credentials that would impress Van Dorn and had even met one or two of his quartermaster officers, ranging wide in quest of supplies and munitions.

He faced west, squared his shoulders and started again, heading across Alabama and on toward Mississippi and the great river.

The Swaymes, from their cabin near Plantation Knob, passed Whipple swiftly across western Alabama and on into Mississippi. At one time he rode as a doctor's assistant, at another he helped drive a herd of cattle destined for the Southern armies. Once across the state line, he boldly assumed his character of Canadian businessman and, in its shelter, made for Columbus in Mississippi. Here, in a still backwater of the war, he waited, unmolested by the authorities and rather sleepily accepted in his few contacts with the townspeople. It seemed to him that he could easily live out the war or even his whole life in the static atmosphere of the town. None of the suspicions that had threatened him in Alabama had crossed the state line or echoed even vaguely into the area of another command.

July slipped into August. Inwardly, he was a-boil with anxiety, combing the newspapers or listening with forced unconcern to travelers' tales. But no clue, direct or indirect, told him that Buell's forces were gathering and shifting to meet Bragg's thrust. It was hard to believe that his news had not reached the Union armies. In addition to the telegram from Malley's post, he had written a report which Swayme had assured him would be handed in at the nearest outpost in two days' time.

So, chained by lack of news, he could only fret away the hot passage of August, conjectures and reasonings thumping over and over in his mind. Nothing could be accomplished at Columbus. He was wasting precious days. Yet he dared not move until Bragg's

offensive had come to a head. Roughly he blocked out two possible plans. The first and most obvious was to slip north and report himself. The second and more hazardous was to attempt to rehabilitate himself in Alabama. With all his suspicions, St. John could not prove that Whipple had gone north from Montgomery. It would be quite possible to induce several people in Mobile, men whose standing was so far unquestioned, to state that he had been in that city at the time when St. John was following the trail north. The telegrapher, Malley, could be counted on to swear that no one had left the train at Plantation Knob on the day in question.

The more he weighed the possibilities, the more his mind turned south to Mobile. There were other developments which would repay watching, like the unusual bustle at the port of Selma about which people were unwilling to talk. Navy officers had appeared there, followed by mechanics and shipwrights. Did that mean that a navy yard was to be established and, if so, what was to be built there? He could only wait, his mind alert to catch the least hint of news that would set him in motion again.

PART VII

Sharon McDaniel

As August ebbed in a blanket of heat and dust, Braxton Bragg suddenly poured his Army of Mississippi out of the mountains about Chattanooga. To the north, Kirby Smith had already struck into eastern Kentucky, apparently dooming George Morgan's small Union force in the Cumberland Gap.

Buell slowly gathered his scattered divisions, began massing in central Tennessee. He was hampered by circuitous lines of communication and by the extreme difficulty of fathoming Bragg's true objective, for the Confederate leader might strike directly at Nashville on the Cumberland River, or veer sharply and drive for Louisville on the Ohio. For some days the Tennessee valleys echoed to crack of rifles and the flat slam of field pieces as the two armies sparred cautiously. In the end, Bragg would swing north in a great race for the Ohio, would just lose that race, fight a drawn battle at Perryville in the north of Kentucky. Then he would fall suddenly back, momentum gone and objective lost.



The two main armies were far away in the western night, ebbing and flowing about Bowling Green. But among the tumbled domes of the Cumberland Mountains, the air lay still and heavy, filling the deep, sudden valleys and tight-clinging roads with a black velvet silence. Sharon McDaniel stood holding her horse's head under a low tree and strained her ears. There were the same three sounds to which she had been listening for the last half hour—the muted chatter of a mountain stream, the regular breathing of her horse, and the beat-beat of her own pulses. She thought that it must be long

past nine o'clock. Could she have taken the wrong trail up from Barboursville? If she had, then she was utterly lost.

These periods of waiting, with which she was becoming increasingly familiar, were the worst times for her, for then her mind began working; reaching back and back into the past. Where was Whip? How could he have gone off without a word to her? She could see him with the sun on his dark hair and his teeth flashing in a grin of encouragement as he looked back over his shoulder to her on a mountain trail.

It was safer to slip on to memories more remote—the canary silk dress all ready to wear to the St. Cecilia Ball when she visited her Charleston aunts. But—that ball dress, still unworn, had first blackened, then burst into flames as it hung in her wardrobe, and flames and sharp echoing shots were not good things to think about either.

She turned her head to the east. A breeze had sprung up to stir the treetops in the valley that lay at her feet. Was there more than the lazy toss of leaves? She turned cold. It was unmistakable, that muted crunch-crunch of hundreds of boots on a dirt road. George Morgan's blue columns were filing away beyond the next hill, not far in actual distance but beyond hope of reaching them through the deep valleys and tangled, breakneck slopes and unknown paths. She shivered and drew closer to her horse as though seeking comfort in its very existence. The wind grew stronger and the crunch-crunch of unseen boots taunted her.

She threw back her head, eyes wide in the dark, and cautiously backed her mount up the slope that rose from the trail. Her hands felt weak and useless and her knees sagged at the sound of hoofs coming nearer. She slipped the reins over a projecting branch and worked higher. A rock rolled under her feet and twigs slapped at her face. Then from the trail a woman's voice called softly, "Miss McDaniel? It's me, Mrs. Edwards."

Sharon gave a gasp of relief, wrenched herself free of branches and skidded down to the trail. Mrs. Edwards, tall and gaunt, dropped from her saddle. "Well, great day, child! You did well, finding this place all by yourself. I told Captain Lyon, back there in Barboursville, that you ought to have started right out with me."

Sharon caught at the older woman's hands. "But are you sure we're right? Listen! You can hear troops moving off to the east. We've got to get to them."

Mrs. Edwards patted Sharon's shoulder. "Hush your frets. I've ridden these trails since the days when they had to hoist me up onto a pony."

"But this is now," Sharon's voice rose in sharp anxiety. "This trail may be right for you, but it isn't for someone and that someone's guiding Morgan's men over there and he's expecting to find us."

Mrs. Edwards sniffed. "Then he can keep right on expecting, 'cause he won't find us. You've got good ears, but you missed one thing. Did you hear any wheels? Of course you didn't. And that's what we're interested in—horses and guns and wagons. Not infantry. And they'll be coming right over this pass and they'll be here quick. Sure you can find your way back to Barboursville if I'm not with you?"

Sharon nodded. Mrs. Edwards went on: "All right. Now I've picked up some more news on the way here. Stevenson's got his Rebs looping farther this way than we thought. You'll take the second half of this column that's coming. Instead of following the same way that you came up here, bear off right at the White Stone Fork. There's a big stone there and a brook crosses the trail."

Sharon said, "I remember it."

"Fine," said Mrs. Edwards. "Then when you come to Burnt Pine, you bear right again and the trail'll lead you right into Barboursville. Your job'll be over. What'll you do then? Go home?"

"No," said Sharon in a flat voice. "Houses get burned as well as trees."

Mrs. Edwards said gently, "I understand. Be sure and let Mrs. Mabry know then, wherever you go."

Sharon nodded absently. In some way, she would manage to reach Buell's army, hoping to hear word of Whipple. If headquarters knew nothing she could hunt up Kinnyard's battery and see what Tom had heard. It had been a comfort to talk to him, back there in Huntsville before Penn Grainger had sent her north to the Cumberland Gap country.

She turned quickly to look up the blackness of the trail where a new sound had been born, a heavy, muffled sound that flowed

on in continuous mutter. Mrs. Edwards cried, "The guns!" and stepped out into the middle of the trail. She looked immensely tall with her cape wrapped about her and one arm held high over her head.

Sharon made out dim bulks growing larger and larger, vague masses that resolved themselves into three slouch-hatted horsemen. Mrs. Edwards called in a low, carrying voice, "Captain Foster? Captain Jacob Foster?"

The riders halted, slid to the ground. Mrs. Edwards beckoned to Sharon. The three officers stood with their hats in their hands, their faces whitish blurs. The tallest spoke. "You're Mrs. Edwards, ma'am? I'm Captain Foster. This is Captain Lanphere, 7th Michigan, and Lieutenant Barrows, 9th Ohio."

Under her cape Mrs. Edwards cupped her elbows in her hands. "Now pay attention." The three officers obediently moved nearer. "The trail's so dark a nigger'd look like a ghost and it's mighty narrow. Some places the hills sheer off so sharp and deep you'd never hear an ox hit the bottom. You'll have to keep so close to the high ground that your hubs'll brush it."

"We've got good drivers," said Foster.

"You'll need 'em. I'm going to ride at the head and your drivers should follow me close, both for direction and to keep from rolling down to God knows where. They'll see me, because I'll turn out the white lining to this cape." She drew Sharon forward. "This is Miss McDaniel. Mrs. Mabry knows all about her. She'll act as link between the two sections and in spots where there's no danger of a wrong turn, she'll range up and down to keep the column closed up. Send someone back with her to tell the boys they're to mind what she says." She held up a long finger. "One wrong turn and you'll all be drawing rations at a Reb prison. Mount up, start your column, and say a prayer." She gave Sharon a gentle shove. "Run along, child. Captain Foster's sending someone with you. If they don't behave back there, you just bear down right and left amongst 'em."

Sharon mounted her horse and a rider paced beside her. "Follow me, ma'am, and keep to the right of the road."

Sharon's eyes became used to the darkness and she could see the drivers leaning forward in their saddles as they clucked to their

teams. Beside each hitch walked a cannoneer holding the trace chains in his fist to silence any clinking. The horses swayed on at a slow pace and their hoofs, muffled with sacking, gave off an odd, dead sound. Strung out on either side or huddled behind piece or caisson, slouch-hatted infantry plodded along.

Sharon eyed the column as she rode past. The escort was weak for any value beyond morale. Muffled hoofs and wheels hid some of the noise but the sacking would soon wear out. Sharon shivered a little as she realized that much of the hope for safety rested on her and Mrs. Edwards.

A Michigan battery was passed, Ohio guns and a stretch of empty trail showed ahead. She set her mount at a smarter trot, her escort bobbing beside her. Then the trail was lost, swallowed up by a dark, moving mass. The escort rode ahead calling, "Halt! Captain Foster's orders."

When Sharon caught up with him she found him with a squat officer, heavily bearded. He waved Sharon's escort away. "Get right back and tell Foster I'll do like he says." As the man rode off, he uncovered. "I'm Lieutenant John Anderson, commanding this battery and the wagons. Just say what you want us to do."

Sharon repeated the instructions Mrs. Edwards had given to the head of the column. Anderson jerked his head in assent. "I'll see the boys obey."

"Good," said Sharon. "There's no turn for quite a stretch and I'm going on to the end of the column and then double back. Start your men and try to close that gap between you and the Ohio battery."

The column lurched on with a hiss of traces and a creak of collars. Sharon felt a sudden wave of exhaustion. Her eyes blurred, her body ached, and the inside of her right knee burned as the saddle-horn galled it. She took off her broad-brimmed hat and let the night air blow over her forehead. The first of the white-topped wagons came on.

The great swaying hoods of canvas were endless. Sharon tried to count them but her head swam. She bit her lip angrily. In this state she would be useless. Her lids smarted as tears sprang behind them. At the end of the column, she turned and started back.

Some wagons were lagging and she called to the drivers who sat

slouched in the dark, cavelike recesses under the hoods. She caught muffled exclamations of surprise. "Burn me, Moses! If thet ain't a gal!" . . . "Ride up here, sister, and give your saddle a chance to cool!" . . . Other shouts, half heard, set her cheeks tingling in resentment but she forgot them as long whips popped and the gaps between wagons shrank.

She was up by the head of the battery again where Anderson hailed her. "Still headed right?"

"So far. Our first turn is about a mile down."

"You're sure this is going to skin us past the Rebs?"

"If we keep going and keep going right. Stevenson's nearest patrols couldn't hit very close before sunrise."

"That's mighty comforting," said Anderson. "Mighty. You know, I'd begun to wonder how safe this was after the Number One, first piece, got this wrapped around his foot back there and handed it to me." He held out a broad-brimmed hat.

Sharon took it quickly, her fingers feeling along the pinned-up brim. Her breath went in sharply. It was hard to see in the dark but her fingers, even through her gloves, could tell her of the wreathed "CSA" pinned to the felt.

"Wonder if you like that Reb hat any better than I do," said Anderson.

Sharon shook herself. "I don't understand it. We've had scouts up past here late this afternoon. They're good woodsmen and they could tell if a rabbit had crossed the trail. They said it hadn't been used by anyone for at least four days."

"Maybe so," said Anderson. "But peel your gloves off and feel that hat. It's not been here more'n a few hours."

"It could have got here in a dozen ways," said Sharon. "I've seen the way men lug around souvenirs they've picked up. They always mean to send them home and never do. This may have fallen from one of the batteries up ahead."

"Maybe a rabbit was lugging it for a souvenir. I still don't like it."

"Don't worry," said Sharon, stuffing the hat into her saddlebags. "If there was anything wrong up ahead, Mrs. Edwards would have sent word back. I'm going to ride on a little and be sure I can spot the turn that's coming."

She found the white rock easily enough and reined in beside it, waving the battery down the trail that forked to the right.

The new trail wound along a rooflike hill, now dipping, now climbing sharply. The march grew noisier as the horses' shoes began to cut through the sacking and the wrapping slipped from wheel and axle. Rocks showed through the surface of the trail.

The hills on either side fell away momentarily and Sharon, riding out in front, heard the echoes of the passage thrown back to her from night-shrouded heights. Then a shaggy wall rose at the right, with the trail clinging to its flank. She looked back over her shoulder and saw the hitches of the first piece bend to the slope. Three miles more and she would see the Burnt Pine turn-off that led on to junction with the rest of Morgan's command. Three more miles and —

She checked her horse abruptly, swinging him back onto his haunches. There was a moment of comparative quiet as the oncoming wheels bit into a rockless stretch of ground. She cupped a hand behind her ear and leaned forward. That sound again. Unmistakable. Somewhere off in the west a horse had whinnied. Another answered, another — Breathless, she counted the calls of five horses. Five horses were not important. But if five whinnied, it might be assumed that there were double that number, five times that number, and quite close by.

Anderson pulled up beside her in the dark. "You heard that too?"

"Yes," said Sharon tersely.

"Maybe it's that rabbit coming back after his hat," grunted Anderson.

"Please!" said Sharon. Those calls meant mounted men, since there was no plantation or farm in that area. Mounted men meant Stevenson's men, since it was impossible that there could be Union cavalry in the neighborhood. And if Southern troopers *were* off there, with the sounding-board of the hills sending them the crash of wheels and the pound of hoofs — She shut her eyes tightly. A sudden attack by mounted men in the dark on this twisting narrow trail would mean slaughter and the loss of every gun and every wagon. Scattered over the line of march, the four companies of Kentucky infantry would be useless.

She turned to Anderson. "Keep the column moving. Let me have your best sergeant to ride ahead with me. I want to post him at the

next place you turn. Then — then I'll come back and — well, watch things the way I've been doing."

Anderson shrugged. "All right." He called, "Sergeant Eller. Get up here, on the loop."

Sharon left the sergeant at Burnt Pine turn-off and headed her horse back along the trail. When she came to the spot where the smooth funnel joined on, she swung down it. Behind her the jolt and slam of the column rang heavily. The din could have been heard miles away. She let her horse trot, trusting to its sureness of foot. When she judged that she had covered two miles, she checked her mount. Ahead, the night was silent. In the rear, the voice of the trail swelled ominously. She trotted on again, discarding her own hat and clapping the other with its wreathed CSA on her head. If she found nothing in the next mile, she could assume the whinnying to have come from stray horses or from some mounted group far beyond any danger point. Then she could go back to the trail.

Something moved in the dark ahead of her. A rifle barrel glinted faintly and a voice snapped, "Git them hands right up in the clouds." She threw her hands high above her head and halted her mount with the pressure of her knee. The man in the dark moved toward her, was joined by other gliding figures. It was no effort for her to make her voice tremble as she asked, "Who — who are you?"

The leading man exclaimed, "Sho'. It's a gal. Well, miss, you git down right smart, now, and kind of talk. We'll ask the questions."

Sharon dismounted shakily. "Yankees!" she muttered huskily. "And they told me —"

A hand caught her elbow firmly. "Take it easy, miss. You wasn't lookin' to find Yanks here?"

"No. Oh, no!" said Sharon quickly. "They told me I wouldn't find anyone."

Another man rumbled, "Guess we'll take it right on from thar. *Who* told you?"

Sharon faced the shadowy speaker. "Why, Lieutenant Granby, of course."

"Who's he?"

"Who *is* he? Why, he's in Yeiser's Georgia battery. It's right over there now."

A voice said, "No troops east of here. Yeiser's s'posed to be 'most to Williamsburg by now."

"Oh, no," said Sharon. "I don't know where he's supposed to be but he's really on that trail to the east. Listen. You can hear the wheels from here. He's taking a shorter way to Barboursville, chasing the Yankees. He's got wagons and some North Carolina infantry with him. I saw them."

A stubborn voice insisted, "Cain't be. Yeiser's gone sky-hootin' —"

Someone else cut in. "Don't make me feel too good, hearin' a lady called a liar. Just the same, miss, I kind of like to know what you was doin' 'long of Yeiser over yonder."

"Oh, of course," said Sharon. "He was right kind. You see, my brother's an officer in his battery, Lieutenant Kirk. He was hurt in an explosion or something. I heard about it and came on to find him."

"Come on from whar?" The group about her had swelled so that Sharon couldn't tell where the last sullen growl came from.

She answered, with forced eagerness, "Oh, I'd been at Knoxville. You see, I haven't any home. The Yankees burned it. I was staying with a Mrs. Mabry. You must know her husband. He's a colonel in our army."

The man who had first halted her leaned on his rifle. "What you do then?"

"Why, as soon as I heard about George, I started for the army, up in front of the Gap, only they'd gone out after the Yankees when I got there."

"Why ain't you hit back home, then?"

"Because," said Sharon patiently, "they told me that George had been brought along in an ambulance. But when I caught up with the battery, Captain Yeiser told me he'd been sent back to Clinton, to the hospital there."

"Clinton on the Holston?"

"Clinton? Why, no. Clinton's on the Clinch. So Captain Yeiser told me I could strike off here and double back through Rogers' Gap straight down to Clinton. I was afraid to go right back the way I'd come. The trail's awfully narrow and the wheels keep slipping close to the edge. Will you — will you send someone back with me? I know I'm safe as long as I'm with our army, but there are

so many people who are helping the Yankees all through here — awful people.”

Her chief interrogator fumbled out a pipe, struck a light. The glow fell on a lean, bearded face, sharp-eyed. His cheeks tucked in as he drew on his pipe. Suddenly he stopped puffing and the match burned higher. “Where’d you git thet hat?” he asked abruptly.

Sharon forced a laugh. “Oh, I tried to ride under some trees off the trail and lost mine. This really belongs to Captain Yeiser. He lent it to me.”

The match flared again and the pipe bowl began to glow. “Reckon this is all right, boys. She knows Colonel Mabry, knows whar Clinton is, and we sure got a hospital thar. Just the same, we’d maybe better send a few boys to look at Yeiser. How’s the trail, miss?”

“Oh, it’s really very easy. Of course, it isn’t a real trail until you reach the battery. There are two gullies that you don’t see until you’re right on top of them. I had a terrible time but I know that you’d have no trouble. It’s not more than three miles or perhaps four.”

There was a pause. Then the man spoke uncertainly. “Well, now, I don’t reckon we’d ought to fret Yeiser at that. Might as well keep goin’ north. We can report no Yanks here’bouts.”

“And you’ll start me back for Rogers’ Gap?” asked Sharon.

“Mount up. We’ll point you right. But I can’t send no boys thet far back with you. We’re north-bound and hammerin’ hard.”

As she rode west through the night near the head of some twenty horsemen, Sharon began to wonder if the risk she had taken had been worth while. Twenty men could annoy the column back on the trail, but could do little more than that. She felt a growing sense of depression. She had, for the moment, won a gamble, but the yield was so small as to make her gesture seem futile.

Dawn seemed to be coming on or else the country was more open, less soaked in the blackness of the hills, for stretched out before her were several troops of cavalry or mounted infantry, the men lounging in the grass or fussing with their harness. It was a force which could have wrecked Captain Foster’s whole column with little trouble. She heard a voice reporting, “That wasn’t nothing but Geo’gia troops, suh. Might’s well hit ’long.”

She was questioned again by a group of officers to whom the patrol had reported. They listened with a sort of impatient courtesy, obviously interested in pushing their command on to the north. Sharon was led to a well-marked trail that would take her to Rogers' Gap and on to Clinton and Knoxville.

When the trail bent beyond a clump of sycamores, she halted, listening intently. The thick shuffle of the cavalry horses was dying and dying. Far to the east she could make out the faintest of rumblings, as though distant wheels were rolling out of the farthest range of perception. She sat for a moment, threading the reins through her fingers. She could go on through Rogers' Gap and thence to Knoxville, stopping at houses and cabins that she knew. It would be easy.

She swung her horse about and headed back down the trail where the cavalry had been halted, then struck east along the funnel.

Through the last stages of the march, through Booneville and West Liberty to the Ohio at Greenupsburg, Sharon felt numb in mind and body. At a little store by the river she had bought a blue silk shawl and a fresh flowered bonnet, but their tonic effect was lost on her as she walked with Mrs. Edwards to General George Morgan's headquarters. Mrs. Edwards, pokerlike and tireless in rusty black, observed briskly, "Usually it's best for folk like us to keep out of sight, but in this part of the world it's different. All Union. That's what makes it smell so good."

Sharon followed her listlessly into the room where General Morgan stood before an empty fireplace. His keen, whiskered fighter's face softened as he bowed to them. "Please sit down," he said gravely. "When Bragg began his move, most people crossed my force off the Union ledgers. They were wrong. I'm writing Washington that, although we had heavy masses on three sides of us, we've come through without the loss of a gun or wagon. Now those guns'll go into action for us again and the wagons'll haul our supplies. That's due in great part to you and people like you. If there's anything that I can do for either of you, you've the right to ask it."

Mrs. Edwards jerked her chin. "The only thing you can do for me, young man, is to get more of your boys down here and chase

the Secesh out of East Tennessee. It's Union soil and they don't belong on it."

Morgan smiled grimly. "That'll come in time. How about you, Miss McDaniel?"

Sharon looked up at him. "There's nothing more to do in my part of the state. You've given it back to the Rebels. Will you let me have a pass that'll take me to Buell's army, Rousseau's division?"

Morgan raised his heavy eyebrows. "You want to keep on working?"

"Yes. There's something I've got to find out."

The big open-fronted tent pitched in the butternut grove beyond Taylorsville, Kentucky, was chill and dank and Sharon could feel her stout little boots sinking into gluey masses of mud and tangled grass. The provost captain, a swarthy, sardonic man with an air of perpetual weariness, set out a camp chair for her.

Sharon drew her hooded waterproof cape tighter about her and sat down, trying to smile at the captain. "I know you're terribly busy, but General Morgan's pass said —"

The captain handed her a folded paper. "There it is. In order, of course, though why you didn't stay on a nice, warm, dry river boat up at Louisville's beyond me."

"I—I'm looking for a battery," said Sharon.

"You're lucky," said the captain. "I'm looking for a brigade, two regiments, a column of two hundred and fifty Reb prisoners, and my boss's heavy underwear." His eyes, that looked wearier and more abstracted than they were, studied her carefully. There sure was determination in that little high-bridged nose and round chin. He wondered what she'd done to get pass and endorsement.

She said in a low voice, "I'm looking for Kinnyard's Independent Ohio Battery, General Rousseau's division."

The captain shook his head. "I don't know where anything is. The only reason I know where *I* am is because I keep my right foot tied to this table leg and my left foot in my pocket."

"But I was sure a provost would know," said Sharon.

The captain stirred wearily. "Listen, lady. Bragg took a hiding and the boys are chasing him, about the way a turtle chases a cotton-

tail. Some of them are still at Perryville and some are pushed out as far east as Crab Orchard."

Sharon sat silent for a moment, listening to the patter of the rain on the canvas and the irritating spat-spat-spat of a slow leak close by her. She got up. "I'll go on, then," she said, drawing on her small gauntlets. "My pass will take me, won't it?"

"Guess so, if you want it to. But the rain's good for two more days and the roads are jammed. I suggest that you come back to Louisville with me, have dinner at the Galt House and then go on and see Adah Isaacs Menken at Mozart Hall. She's doing *Tartarine* or something like that. Of course, I don't *know*, but I'd say you'd find it a lot more fun."

Sharon's mouth tightened and she said coldly, "I couldn't think of taking you from your duties. I'll ride on toward Perryville."

The captain smothered a yawn. "It was just an idea and maybe I've had better ones. Run along to Perryville if you want to. I'll send Sergeant Kyper with you. But let me know if you change your mind. I'm said to be extremely amusing."

Sharon rode on through the rain, Sergeant Kyper dawdling stupidly behind her on a dejected horse. A steady stream of wagons rolled south down the slimy road. Sodden infantry, their collars turned up and hats pulled low, slogged on, cursing the wheels that spattered mud on them.

Who would know about Kinnyard's men? The battle had been fought on October 8th, more than ten days ago. Surely by this time things would have settled down enough to make the finding of the battery fairly simple.

Bloomfield was even more depressing than Taylorsville. The rain beat down harder against ragged roofs and broken windows. Civilians peered at unburied horses in the main street, at wrecked wagons. Soldiers on foot and on horseback snarled and snapped at each other, asked directions in surly growls, gave answers with grudging irritability. She ducked her head and rode on.

Sharon's sergeant looked at the tattered leaden clouds, keeping up a continuous mutter of disgust as he thought of his long, wet ride back to Taylorsville should his present mission ever come to an end.

Sharon turned. A cottage showed through the rain just off the

right of the road. A few horses were tethered outside and a wisp of smoke trickled out of the chimney. The door was open and scraps of song drifted out, underscored by the tinkle of a piano. She reined in, listening intently. Sergeant Kyper looked at her hopefully, rubbing his wet beard. "This far's we go, ma'am?" he asked.

Sharon held up her hand, frowning. The song went on, came to her clearer and clearer:

Ven ve lif in dot house mit der gable,
Bei der vine-covered banks von der Rhine.

The pidgin-German words that Whip had sung on the ride down to the Tennessee! She slipped from the saddle and tossed her reins to Kyper. "Wait here, please," she said and ran up the steps onto the porch of the cottage.

The room was thick with the smoke of a badly tended fire and the reek of cigars. It was bare save for a small, battered piano and a few stools on which glasses and bottles perched precariously. About the piano crowded a half-dozen men in short blue jackets and red-striped breeches. The man at the keyboard, wide corporal's stripes on his sleeves, thumped away, his kepi aslant on his thrown-back head and his saber trailing incongruously by the nicked piano stool. He banged louder and started a new verse.

Und mine vater, his voice vos a qviver,
Und mine modter her eyes vos in tears,
As dey thought uf dot home bei der river,
Und kind friendts aus earlier years.

Sharon stood irresolutely on the threshold, looking at the circle of bent blue backs. Then she called, "Excuse me—but can you tell me where Kinnyard's battery is?"

The pianist spun around on his stool as the circle broke, and Sharon became the focus of six pairs of eyes, saw bearded faces, mustached faces, clean-shaven faces that froze in bewilderment, slowly warmed into expressions of delighted surprise. The pianist whacked his knee. "Well! Come in! Have a seat! Have a drink!" He turned sideways to the keyboard and began to strum softly. "What'd you like to hear?"

She tried to meet the gaze of the six men, some of them curious, some friendly, some leering. She glanced over her shoulder at Kyper, who was picking his teeth morosely in the rain. She said again, "I'm looking for Kinnyard's Ohio battery."

A tall, bearded private raised his glass and laughed. "Never heard of 'em. But we'll do. Fairfield's Indiana Howitzers."

Sharon bit her lip. "Where are your officers? Maybe they'd know."

The pianist wrinkled his long nose. "Officers? We just keep them for mascots, lady. When we go into action, we strap them to the battery wagon so they won't get in the way and the lead driver of the first piece gives the commands."

Sharon's eyes flashed. "Maybe you haven't heard about Kinnyard's, but a lot of people *have* heard about you. Did you ever get back those two pieces the Rebs took from you at Decherd?"

The piano stopped abruptly and the men were silent. The corporal got up from the stool and walked slowly toward Sharon. Then he took off his kepi, showing a wide bald spot surrounded by sparse black hair. "Sorry, lady. This is mighty far from the base and people like you don't often get down where we are. Kinnyard's? They weren't with us. We were to the right with Phil Sheridan."

"They were in Rousseau's division," said Sharon. "They wear red shirts and sometimes blue jackets over them."

"Wait a minute," said the corporal. "What outfit was the cousin of yours, Jake, the one that got hit?"

"Loomis's Ohio. Sure, I remember now. When I saw him in that house down the road, they was fellers from other outfits there, too. Kinnyard's. Yeh, that was it. Three-four of 'em. A big top soldier with a Minié through his neck."

Sharon turned white. A big first sergeant. Maybe Whip hadn't taken up his commission yet or there wasn't time for the oath. She asked, "Did you hear his name?"

"Didn't get to hear it, but they've all been cleared out. Sent to Louisville or Cincinnati."

"Would they know at that house — where they've gone, I mean?"

"Could ask. Come to think of it, there was one they couldn't move. I ain't paid him much mind. Just an officer — second loot. Name of Mason — Matson — something like that."

Sharon stood very straight and rested her hands on the doorframe.

"There's no one of either name in Kinnyard's. It — it couldn't have been Madden, could it?"

"Could a been Mayhew or Mayhem. Big, light-complected feller with curly hair. Got hit — uh — in the leg, kind of high up. They was sayin' they'd either bury him or it."

"Where's this house?" asked Sharon in a small, tight voice.

"Two down on the left. Got a stack of arms and legs unless they've moved 'em. Had to have a guard there to keep the dogs from worryin' at 'em."

Sharon pushed herself away from the door and walked rigidly onto the porch. Kyper threw away his toothpick.

"We're going on," she said and rode off, deaf to the shouts from the cottage. Her eyes were wide and her lips slightly parted. Her mind worked spasmodically. Tom! It couldn't be Tom! Tom, who always seemed to be around when she needed him, who always kept her cheered up about Whip, who would talk endlessly to her about Whip, back there in Huntsville. She had come back to the little town near Monte Sano after a trip almost into Georgia, discouraged by what she had seen of the plight of the Unionists there, sick at heart over the futility of her mission, bone-weary with posing as an ardent Secessionist among people who obviously liked and trusted her. Somehow Tom had had wind of her return and roses arrived at Mrs. Ingalls's rather grim house almost as soon as she had, roses and a note. He was very anxious to see her. If not this time, then good luck and perhaps they'd meet on her next return. He must have used up most of his scant leisure, waiting to see what he could do for her. Now it was her turn. But what could she do? "They was sayin' they'd either bury him or it."

The first house on the left — a farm with a long, sagging slope of roof and army mules tethered in slant-walled sheds beyond. More fields seen through curtains of rain. The second house. It was long and low and rambling. Horses were hitched to a gnawed rail on the trampled mud that had once been a lawn, and two ambulances were scoring deep wheel tracks over the wrecks of flower beds. The wet air was filled with a reek of damp earth that overlay heavier, more sinister odors — a whiff of chloroform, the gagging sweetness of decay.

Her horse ambled on toward the house, unguided, while Sharon

stared at the ambulances, at the men carrying stained stretchers out onto the deep porch, at great patches of fresh-turned earth and at the arm, neatly severed just above the elbow, that lay by the water-logged path. It was a sinewy arm with white-nailed fingers tightly clasped and just above the hairy wrist a little blue flower was tattooed. The sense of death and desolation even reached the sulky Kyper, who said hoarsely, "Hey, you don't want in there, ma'am!"

Sharon gave a little choked cry and slid to the ground, leaving Kyper to catch her reins. She stumbled blindly up the steps and into the dim hall where wide boards creaked under her feet. At the far end, a man with bright shoulder straps called sharply to her. She shook her head mechanically and turned into the room on the left.

It was lined with cots, some of them wood and others iron. Near the door a scowling, shaggy man, naked to the waist, sat up in bed, cursing the orderly who was passing a damp sponge over his knotty shoulders. Across the aisle a boy with a scraggly beard was holding forth at length in a high, whiny voice on the discomforts of dysentery. Sharon's hands flew to her cheeks and she backed hurriedly out, colliding with a man who carried the rear end of a blanketed stretcher while a corporal limped beside it intoning as he read from a slip of paper, "Kleinschmidt, Hermann Franz-August, 'A,' 79th Penn. Shove him in that patch beyond the larkspur and don't forget to put up the marker."

Panic seized Sharon and she turned quickly. Four more men, each shouldering a stretcher, clumped in from the outside, blocking the way and forcing her against her will into the room at the right. Her foot slipped in something slick and sticky and she caught at the edge of the open door. The air was heavy with chloroform and there was little sound save the rustle of heavy breathing.

Down the hall a young voice, high with terror, shrieked, "Not yet! Oh my God, Doc, not yet! I can feel it! I can *feel* it!"

Heavier tones rumbled, "Hell, boy, it's good's off now." There was a hideous sound of sawing, a sharp metallic *twink*, and something heavy fell wetly to the floor.

Sharon wanted to get out, out into the rain-washed air. She had been a fool to plunge headlong into this dreadful house. She could

have sent Kyper, could have asked an orderly or the sharp-voiced officer who had called to her from the end of the hall.

There was a rattling outside and a man barked, "Yeh! Rip it right off and the next shutter too." With a tearing sound, wooden panels were pulled away from the window at the left and murky daylight fell across the nearest cot. All at once Sharon forgot the war wreckage along the road, almost forgot the war itself as she saw Tom Madden's head on the crumpled pillow.

She moved closer, feet uncertain. Tom was sleeping heavily. His deep-set eyes were sunken and his cheeks were hollow, but his brown hair still curled triumphantly and there was nothing slack about the set of his square chin. One arm was crooked over his head and the other lay across his chest. Sharon let her eyes move cautiously down the blankets and she felt a little catch in her throat as she saw the outlines of both knees. They had not amputated! Or—her heart grew cold—had they decided that amputation was superfluous?

The next shutter rattled and Tom opened his eyes. Sharon instinctively drew back into the dimness. Tom blinked and then his arm reached out, hesitant with unbelief. He said huskily, "Sharon! You've come!" A hint of shadow crossed his face and he smiled uncertainly. "Wish I could give you news of Whip, but—"

Sharon dropped to her knees by the cot and caught his hand. "Tom, Tom! Whip's all right. He's sure to be. But—but—oh, what have they done to *you*?"

His hand, heavy with muscle and thick with calluses, closed about hers. It was hot and dry, but gentle for all its hard strength. He said, "I'm fine. I'm absolutely all right. And look. Don't worry about Whip. At least three people who've been doing stuff like his have come back into the lines."

"I said he'd be safe. Please don't fence with me. What happened to you?"

A faint grin showed on Tom's face. "Happened? Why, nothing much. I got shaved by an orderly this morning. This noon they gave me some broth with part of a piece of a real chicken in it."

She still clung to his hand. "Tom—I'm serious."

"I know, I know, Sharon. And it was wonderful of you to look me up. There really isn't much wrong. A Reb sharpshooter drilled

me just below the hip. Just a measly little nick that wouldn't even interest a medical student."

"Please, Tom. That was a week ago and you still look —"

He gestured with his free hand. "Bandage slipped and I lost a lot of blood in the ambulance. Otherwise I'd be up doing a buck-and-wing."

"You're sure of that? How much longer are they going to keep you here?"

"They — well, they haven't decided whether — I mean whether to keep me here until I can get back to the battery or send me up to Louisville."

Sharon's voice dropped lower. "You don't mean that. Tom, tell me. I've *got* to know."

"What else do I mean? They just haven't made up their minds. You know what army paper work's like."

Even with the shutters down, the light was dim. Sharon leaned closer to the cot, trying to read in Tom's expression what the doctors could not decide on. He turned his eyes toward the other cots where men slept as he had been sleeping, possibly under opiates. She bit her lip to steady its involuntary quiver as realization struck her sharply. Her voice was almost a whisper. "Tom — unless — unless they do send you right back to the battery, I'm going with you."

"That's wonderful, Sharon, but you don't need to."

"I'm going with you. Don't you understand?"

His head moved on the pillow and he smiled at her. It was the same expression she had seen often before, a smile that tried to be friendly while masking a deeper feeling. He said, "You don't have to, Sharon, but I love your thinking of it. It's like you."

Still kneeling, she drew back a little. "Oh, Tom, are you *trying* to be obtuse? Are you trying to make me say — oh, you must know what I mean."

A flush came over his hollow cheeks and he tried to raise himself on his elbow. "Look here! You — you can't mean —"

She laid her other hand over his. "I do. Or I mean what I'm *not* saying and —"

Tom gently freed his hand. "Hold on, here. What about Whip?"

"You've always known how Whip felt about me. Now I'm glad it was that way. I'm — oh, how much more do I *have* to say?"

He twisted and his arms went out, settled about her slim shoulders. He whispered, "Nothing, Sharon, nothing. Just come closer, closer than that. Oh, confound this leg. No — you're not hurting me."

Sharon was unconscious of the rough pillow cover against her cheek, of the side bar of the cot biting into her side as she knelt. Her arms twined tight about Tom's neck as though she feared he might be torn from her. Her hat slipped off and her hair fell across his forehead. "It's you, Tom — just you. I must have known it all the time, but it never really came to me until I saw you just now. Or maybe it was when those gunners told me there was someone here with a name like yours. It was — oh, Tom — how can I tell you *anything* when you keep on —"

"You're telling me lots of things in lots of ways, dearest. I knew all about you the second you walked into Penn Grainger's room."

"You must be smarter than I am. I ought to have known then, too. But I did want to rumple up your curls and that was something, wasn't it?"

"Then that's the first time I ever liked those blasted curls. I was going to get my head clipped like some of the Germans. Now I won't. But let's wrap a little thought about you. How'd you get here and where are you staying?"

"Don't worry about me. I've got a letter from General George Morgan, and General Buell endorsed it. I'll be all right and I'm going to stay right here until — until —"

He asked in an odd, flat voice, "Until what, Sharon?"

Cold crept over her as she answered, "Until the — the doctors say whether — what's the matter?"

"Better straighten up. Someone's coming in."

From the corridor a grave, pleasant voice sounded, was answered in thick, Teutonic accents. "So to these contract surgeons" (the words came out "gondragtd zurtchuntz") "I say, *Pfui!* No, no, no, the leg, it must not come off. Three days I watch it. Soon he walk so good as you and me."

The other voice muttered, "Suppose you're wrong?"

"In that case, my friend, is wrong the University of Heidelberg. Such opinion I do not hold. *Nu, nu*. Now we shall see the sufferer and make once more investigation."

Sharon stared at Tom. "It's you they're talking about. I know it."

Tom was looking incredulously at the door. "It's his voice! How did —"

"Who, Tom? Whose voice?"

Two men came into the room, peering in the uncertain light. One was a fattish, ruddy Medical Corps major, the other a tall, carefully dressed civilian with a well-tended, graying beard parted in the middle. He carried a silk hat under one arm and bent his head to catch what his shorter companion was saying. The German went on, "*Ach! So finden wir —*" He stopped as Sharon rose quickly. "*Quatsch!* What is this? Little-girl-nurses they send us yet?"

Tom called huskily, "Dad!" and the tall man strode past the doctor to the other side of the cot. Tom's father! Sharon looked at him almost fearfully. An alien world was reaching past guard posts and sentry lines to touch Tom.

The elder Madden looked down at his son, a mixture of timidity and helplessness that Sharon found touching. He fumbled for words and then put out his hand almost awkwardly. "I'm glad to see you, Tom," he said. Restraint broke at his son's grip. "We've been worried about you, terribly worried. But Dr. Stein says he'll have you on your feet in no time. Mother and the girls sent their love. They wanted to come but I told them an army was no place for ladies." Sharon felt her heart shrink at his words, but he seemed aware of no one but Tom.

Tom laughed up at him. "Get your breath, Dad. Gosh, this is a wonderful day. How'd you ever manage to find me? Sit down on the cot. There's plenty of room." Marcus Madden perched gingerly on the edge and Sharon felt a further pang as his arm settled about Tom's shoulder. Tom stretched out a hand toward Sharon. "You couldn't have picked a better day, Dad. This is Miss McDaniel, Miss Sharon McDaniel. You'll remember her from my letters."

Marcus Madden stiffened. He rose slowly and walked around the cot. Sharon tilted her chin and met his scrutiny. He had the same broad forehead and strong, straight nose that Tom had and his deep-set eyes were gray. For a moment she thought that those eyes looked

at her with stern appraisal. Then a quick warmth came into them and he smiled under his beard as he held out his hand. "Tom didn't write enough about you, Miss McDaniel, but I ought to have been able to see you between the lines. Another Union soldier, my dear, and a fine one."

She met his glance and somehow felt that Tom's father was not from an alien world, or, if he were, that he was trying hard to enter her world and Tom's, that he recognized there was something that they shared. She looked at blond, ruddy Stein and found that his pale blue eyes were fixed on hers as though sending her a tacit message. She smiled up at Marcus Madden. "I must go now. You and Tom have a lot to talk over."

Stein beamed approval but Tom protested, "You'll not go, Sharon. Sit down here. Dad and I want to know what you've been up to off in the Cumberland — if that's where you were."

Stein covertly wagged a sausagelike finger at Sharon, who nodded. "I'll be back, Tom. Your father's come a long way to see you."

"But you'll look in again?" pleaded Tom.

"Very soon." Sharon turned to Stein, who clicked his heels and offered her his arm with ceremonious solemnity. She looked back over her shoulder. Tom's eyes were following her eagerly. His father was drawing up a chair and his expression fully repaid her for her obedience to Stein's mute command. As they crossed the threshold she said, "Thank you, Dr. Stein."

His china-blue eyes were innocently round. "And why, *gnädige Fräulein*?"

Sharon gave a low laugh. "Because I want to," she said.

"Then why not? Now you have five little minutes? Let me beg them of you. So. This way." He opened the door of a tiny room under the stairs where books spilled from packing cases onto the floor, the single table, the two chairs. He cleared the two seats and bowed Sharon to one of them. "It is small, this room," he said apologetically. "Yet it is better so, *nicht wahr*? Man thinks more easily in tight walls." He seated himself and turned his blue gaze on Sharon. "Our young man out there, he interests you? *Ach!* No need to answer. What says our von Münch Bellinghausen? '*Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag*' — 'Two hearts with one struck.' No, no!

'With one beat' is better, yes? Ah, I worry much when first they bring him in, that young man. Today, I think you tell him something he much wish to hear."

Sharon colored. "I—I think he wanted to hear it. I wanted to say it."

"So! I, too, would tell him another thing he wish to hear. It is about his leg. I see now my news is not so necessary. And what you tell him, it will endure?"

"As long as I do," said Sharon simply.

Stein placed his plump palms on the table. "Then is he cured! There is no mistake. I prescribe you see him so much as you can. You are of Kentucky?"

Sharon sighed. "No. Tennessee. The eastern part."

The major nodded slowly. "And you do not like that there is another flag there? Ah, I understand. Very well I understand. To you it seem your idea—idea?—no, the ideal of you and of all your peoples lies dead. Ah, but I tell you it is not so. *Ach*, in Germany, many of us had an ideal of how peoples should live. A free German Union, a republic of German States. Delegates to the King of Prussia go and in a palace courtyard are they welcomed. Then—" he made a quick gesture—" *auf einen augenblick*, in a eye-blink, close themselves the gates and soldiers shoot down the delegates."

Sharon looked at him, wide-eyed. "How horrible," she said.

Stein shrugged. "True. It was not *gemütlich*. But, *lieber Fräulein*, note this. The delegates, they were dead. Their ideal was not. It led those who believed by the thousand and tens thousand to this country. A good seed does not grow in one field which is too shadow, too wet, too dry? So, the seed being good, is taken to a field which suit it. Ah, I tell you an ideal, it is not tied to a mountain range or a river valley, not to the Rhine or the Tennessee. No."

Sharon's hands twisted in her lap. "But the people, Dr. Stein. They're waiting."

"Is not important. No, no. I tell you. One month, one year, so long as they hope, is all the same. Your good young man, he has muscles very badly tore. He will not walk until snow comes and goes and time will seem long. But he will walk and walk well. And long later, he will tell your grandchildren, yours and his, 'In the old wars was I wounded. I did not walk for —' then will he turn to you and

say — 'it was how long, *Liebchen* — one week, one month?' And so will the peoples of your homeland talk when they tell of times under Jefferson Davis."

Sharon's mouth contracted. "I wish I could think so. But no one seems to care about us."

"You are soon-come from there? Recent-come, I mean?"

"I — I come and go, when it's necessary. There are ways."

Stein's blue eyes grew rounder and rounder. "You come? You go?"

"There are things to be done."

"*Kolossal!*" muttered Stein. He bounced to his feet and made a stiff little bow from the waist. "When next you go, kindly inform your peoples they need only work and hope like you." He turned quickly at the sound of footsteps. Marcus Madden stood in the low doorway, stooping a little to avoid the lintel. The light was poor and Sharon thought that he looked grim. She rose slowly, with an odd, pinched feeling as though the older man were intruding, unconsciously hostile.

Then he smiled and the gloom of the little room lifted. He held out his arm toward her. "Tom and I were wondering what was keeping you, Sharon. It was all right to slip away for a minute, but not for all this time. Come along back with me — that is, if Dr. Stein allows it."

Stein raised a stern finger. "I do not allow. I command. But I wait over my watch with craned neck. In fifteen minutes I descend on you."

Marcus Madden smiled. "That sounds mighty terrifying, doctor. In five minutes, I'll come back and help you watch. This way, Sharon, my dear."

Sharon glided down the corridor beside him, feeling somehow very small and fragile and yet utterly sheltered. It was a nice feeling and she looked up at her tall escort. "Dr. Stein can tell time, Mr. Madden," she said. "You stay with Tom and me."

Orderlies had propped shutters, ripped from the outside of the house, to form a rude screen that closed Tom's cot off from the rest of the gloomy room. A lamp threw a feeble yellow light from a packing case by his head and as Sharon crossed the threshold, a voice from the far shadows whispered hoarsely, "Gal comin' in. Any

sonabitch that talks dirty, I'll shake his guts right out his gullet."

Tom's father coughed loudly and rattled a chair across the floor for Sharon. She sat down and laid her hand lightly on Tom's forehead. "Not feeling too tired?"

"Feeling hell-bending. Honest I am. Pull up beside Sharon, Dad, so I can see both of you." Through half-closed lids he watched the play of light on Sharon's slender neck, the rounding of her chin, the curve of her mouth and the soft warmth of her eyes. Gone was her lost, haunted look that had struck him so forcibly on that strange evening when he had first seen her. He felt a deep glow as her glance rested on his father's face. He stretched cautiously, aware of his bandages, and beamed on the pair. "It isn't every day that a fellow gets back his leg and his girl and his father all at once," he chuckled. "Dad told me Stein's verdict."

Marcus Madden plunged his hand into an inner pocket, drew out a paper. "I knew there was something else you'd want to hear — Sharon as well as you, Tom." He slipped on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and leaned toward the light. "This is official. I got it at Louisville. Now listen. 'Escaped from Atlanta —'"

Tom's head jerked up from the pillow. "Atlanta?"

His father smiled. "Don't interrupt. 'Escaped from Atlanta the following Union soldiers: William Knight, J. R. Porter, James A. Wilson, W. W. Brown, D. A. Dorsey, Mark Wood, Martin Hawkins, and John Wollam.'" He replaced the paper and took off his spectacles while Tom stared at him wide-eyed and Sharon clasped her hands with a low cry. "Yes, it's official. They escaped on October 16th and headquarters seemed to figure that if the Rebs had a chance of getting them back, they'd have had them by now. The idea seems to be that if they got really clear, there'd be people standing by to look after them." He laid a hand over Sharon's. "Does that seem logical to you?"

"Yes. Yes, of course. The right sort of people." Her face grew suddenly grave and her eyes took on a faraway look. "Those men will have scattered. They'll work up into Tennessee in twos and threes. I ought to be there right now, making sure that people are ready for them, watching for them."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Marcus Madden. "You've got to give yourself a *little* rest or you'll snap! Go back there now? Why, you can't do it. Can she, Tom?"

Tom looked thoughtfully at the ceiling. "M'm. I know how you feel, Sharon. If you think you can really help by going, I won't say a thing. But figure this. It'd take you how long to get, say, to the Georgia-Tennessee border, now that Buell's got things mussed up like a high-holder's nest? A week? Ten days? You'd do well to make it in that time. By then the boys'll either be champing Union rations or back in jail. Am I right?"

Sharon rested her chin on her fist, staring into the shadows beyond the lamp. Then she sighed. "Yes, I guess you are," she said reluctantly. "Just the same — how many does that leave of your people, Tom?"

"Let's see. There's Will Pittenger. There's Bill Bensinger and Bob Buffum, Jake Parrot, Bill Reddick, and Elisha Mason. That's all."

Marcus Madden looked at his list again. "Yes. That gees with the statement I had. Just those."

Tom raised himself. "Then that tells us another thing. Whip's still safe."

"How on earth can you say that?" asked his father.

"Or he was up to the sixteenth. Don't you see? If he'd been picked up doing whatever he was doing, he'd have been identified and sent back to Atlanta with the others. It's just what the Rebs would have done. They were so clabbered up about the *General* that I'll bet that if I got loose now and went up to Richmond and shot Jeff Davis, they'd ride me down to Atlanta on the Andrews charges and waive the slight case of assassination. Isn't that so, Sharon?"

"Pretty much so," said Sharon. "It's good reasoning."

Tom grinned at her. "We gunners are *always* logical. Our exacting profession demands it."

"Then," said a guttural voice from the door, "a gunner will not make monkey-thumpings if his visitors leave him now? He will take most logical sleep-draughtings?"

Tom scowled as Stein stepped into the room holding up a huge bulbous watch. "I didn't say we were fanatics, Major."

Marcus Madden rose reluctantly. "We'll be back tomorrow, Tom. I've a carriage out in the shed and I'll take Sharon with me. Where are you staying, my dear?"

"I — I'd only just come," she said.

"Better yet. I'm putting up with George Shiverick, about five miles up the road. You remember him, Tom. A lawyer who used to

come up for the fall shooting when you were in college. A very old friend, Sharon, and I know that Mrs. Shiverick will be delighted to look after you."

She looked dubiously at him. "You're sure he's — well —"

"The right sort of person? My dear, he looks on Lincoln as a Copperhead. Wait till you hear him talk. Then I've another plan. How long before Tom can move, Dr. Stein?"

Stein shrugged. "If he is good boy, in one little week. If he is not, then to the contract surgeons must you address yourselves."

"Good. And during that week you'll be keeping him pretty busy with dressings and things like that."

"And probings," said Stein with an assumed grisly relish.

"All right. I've got to go back in two days' time. Sharon, I want very much to take you with me. You can get settled at home, treat yourself to a real rest, and I'll see Governor Tod about releasing Tom to us the instant Dr. Stein will let him go. Will you come with me?"

"Go on, Sharon," said Tom. "You've just got to."

She closed her eyes. Her whole being relaxed as she thought of the safety, the security, the comfort she would know across the Ohio with Tom's family. Then she shook off the vision. "I can't. There's always work to do."

Marcus Madden stepped nearer. "Let's think a little more about this. Suppose you do go back now and take on a big job. You've run yourself pretty fine and you might find that you couldn't go on with it. You'd be in a bad fix yourself, but the people who'd been counting on you would be in a worse one. Better come back with me. Just sleep and eat and rest until you feel like doing something more. The whole place will be yours from the library to the stables. Two weeks, a month of that and you'll be able to waltz through anything that has to be done. Isn't that so, Dr. Stein?"

"I do not say no," observed Stein, rocking back and forth on his heels.

"There you are, Sharon," cried Tom. "And look at this. Bragg's invasion has failed and I'll bet that Buell will chase him clear back into Georgia. There won't be anything for you to do, because the army'll be moving too fast. You and I'll watch it through the papers."

"I want to say yes," said Sharon in a low voice. "I want to so much, but —"

"The word, it is a little one," said Stein quietly. "But to you it is important and you are well advised to say it. I speak as doctor and — you permit? — as friend."

"I'll go," said Sharon, almost in a whisper. "I'll go. I — I hope I'm doing right."

"You are," said Stein with finality. "Now, Herr Madden, I have in my office a water-coloring of the Castle of Neuschwanstein on which your opinion I wish. That opinion in three minutes you will give me, after which we return. *Fräulein*, we must find you by the door."

Tom held out his arms as his father and Stein marched from the room. "Three minutes, dearest," murmured Sharon. "Oh, Tom, Tom. Hurry home. I'll be waiting for you."

Marcus Madden and Sharon waited on the wharf at the Louisville waterfront. At the left, men poured down the gangplank of a newly docked steamer. Sharon watched them as they clumped ashore, company after company, their new uniforms rain-spotted and their colors cased in oilcloth. Marcus Madden, holding an umbrella over Sharon, muttered, "Tremendous. We're very strong, Sharon. That's the third regiment to come ashore since we've been waiting and there's another transport standing off in midstream."

Sharon nodded without speaking. She knew that those raw, full-strength, overequipped units would shrink to two thirds of their present size, would march in soiled tatters with blackened pots and pans lashed to them before they could truly be counted as effectives.

Marcus Madden touched her elbow lightly and dropped his voice. "Look, Sharon. That tall woman over there. See her? In the red-lined cape beyond those two officers on crutches?"

Sharon followed his glance down the wharf and her eyebrows lifted. "Why — she's beautiful!" She shook her head enviously. "Look at all that black hair and just as wavy as if it wasn't raining."

The woman turned sidewise to her, showing a magnificent profile with big, dark eyes and high-colored cheeks. From time to time she tossed her head as though impatient of the wide hood of her cape.

"Don't you know who she is?" whispered Mr. Madden. "That's Pauline Cushman, the actress. Superb creature."

Sharon's eyes widened. "You're sure? That's Miss Cushman? I've never seen her but I've heard a lot about her from — a good many people."

Mr. Madden smiled. "So have I, and I rather wonder that she's allowed to run about like this. After one curtain call, right here in Louisville, she called for a cheer for Jeff Davis. It's common knowledge that she's an arrant Copperhead if not worse."

Sharon pinched her chin thoughtfully. "That may be common knowledge, but uncommon is often more reliable."

"But, my dear Sharon! Calling for a cheer for Jeff Davis!"

"Yes. You see, there were Union officers watching the crowd and they saw just who applauded and cheered. That way, they caught several who had been making trouble for the Union."

Marcus Madden's face wrinkled in doubt. "I presume that's all part of war, but I wish it didn't have to be. How could she have stood up there by the footlights, inviting people to — " He raised his hand. "Shh! She's coming this way."

Pauline Cushman had turned and was walking slowly down the wharf. Her graceful carriage and proudly held head drew murmurs and subdued whistles from colonels and privates alike. As she came nearer, Marcus Madden stepped back to allow her to pass, drawing Sharon with him. The tall woman, whose eyes seemed to be studying the drift of the rain and the woolly edges of the fog bank, stopped and looked keenly at Sharon. Then her full lips curved in a smile. "You're Miss McDaniel, aren't you?"

Sharon eyed her in surprise. "Why — yes."

"I was sure, as soon as I had a good look at you. I'm Miss Cushman, Pauline Cushman. We have mutual friends, Miss McDaniel, a good many of them. Some of them have written me about you, and I must say that they described you very well."

Sharon looked cautiously at her. "You're sure I'm the one? You see, I don't know many people."

The actress smiled and Sharon caught a hint of the warmth and magnetism that had made her famous. "Not many, perhaps, but the right sort." Her dark eyes turned toward Marcus Madden, who stood bareheaded under the umbrella.

Sharon caught the unspoken question. "This is Mr. Marcus Madden. His son's an officer in Kinnyard's battery and — and he's

going to be my father-in-law — Mr. Madden, that is.” She ended in a hurry, blushing lightly.

“A great admirer of your work, Miss Cushman,” said Marcus Madden. “Yes, I’m taking Miss McDaniel home with me to wait until my boy’s discharged from the hospital.”

“They’re to be married?” asked Miss Cushman. “H’m. May I present my good wishes?”

Sharon tried to hide her surprise, not only at the perfunctory words but at the tone, almost disapproving, that underlay them. Miss Cushman went on, “Yes, I hope that you’ll be most happy. Our friend Mrs. Mabry will be rather disappointed, though. She wrote me that she hoped to see you very soon. In fact, she was counting on it strongly and wrote to several friends about here asking them to watch out for you and to give you that message if they saw you. No one else has spoken to you?”

Sharon felt her throat go dry and knew that the beating of her heart had quickened. “No,” she said. “No. I’ve not heard a thing from Mrs. Mabry.”

Miss Cushman shrugged expressively. “I suppose it doesn’t matter now. I’ll write her that she needn’t expect a visit from you.” She murmured a few formal words of farewell, drew her blue cape closer about her and walked away.

“Well!” said Marcus Madden, putting his hat on again. “Well! I must say that the weather changed quite abruptly in that quarter. She was almost rude, just there at the end. Before that, she was, why — what’s the matter, Sharon?”

Sharon, looking earnestly up at him, found it difficult to speak, as though something had closed about her throat. She laid a gloved hand on his lapel. “I’ll be back — just the instant I can.”

He stared down at her. “Back? Where are you going?”

“You’ll understand. I know Tom will. I’ve got to go after Miss Cushman.”

“But what for?”

“Don’t you see?” said Sharon, steadying her voice. She found it hard to shape her words and her lips were dry. “It’s Mrs. Mabry. She needs me.”

“*She* needs you! I tell you, Tom needs you a sight more than any Mrs. Mabry could. Why doesn’t she come to you? Where is she?”

"I don't know, but Miss Cushman will tell me. Probably it's Knoxville."

"Knoxville? But the Rebs have that. Why, you can't go there."

"It'll be no different from other times. There must be something that has to be done." She looked anxiously down the wharf. "There's Miss Cushman. See. Her maid is helping her into her carriage." She caught his hands. "Good-by. I'll write Tom and I'll write you." She spun away from him and ran down the wharf, her head low and her cape caught tight about her.

Marcus Madden stared after her. Some inner prompting told him not to follow her, not to argue with her. Behind him, the wet timbers echoed to the thump of army boots as the new units formed at the foot of the gangplank. He felt suddenly alone, unwanted, pushed aside as the tide of youth tramped past, unaware of him. He looked down to the end of the wharf. The carriage door had been flung open and he could see Miss Cushman's arm reaching out to the slight girl who slowed down by the wheels. The door swung wider. Sharon put a foot on the step, then turned and waved a ridiculously small handkerchief to him. The blue column, tramping ashore, turned half-right and cut off his view. Over the swaying bayonet points, he could just make out the carriage roof and the fat coachman on the box. A whip flourished, wheels ground, and there was nothing save the rain-soaked infantry and their cased colors.

He threw back his head, an odd, lifting sensation in his chest. "By George!" he muttered. "By *George!* That girl! She's — she's — well, she knows what she's going back to a lot better than I do. We're a lucky family. Tom's as lucky in his girl as — as I've been in mine." For an instant, he stood motionless, head bared to the rain. Then his eye caught sight of a low steeple, close to the waterfront. He replaced his hat and walked slowly toward it. The church would surely be open. He was very erect and his face was grave, yet oddly happy.

PART VIII

John St. John

IN the little port of Biloxi, Mississippi, Whipple Sheldon lit a cigar and stepped out onto the wrought-iron balcony of the old pension. Through a haze of smoke, he frowned at the barred flag that now flew from the tall flagstaff of Fort Massachusetts on Ship Island across the bay. The setting sun was red on the working parties that toiled feverishly to complete the scarps and bastions begun under the old colors; it turned the top of the tall lighthouse to gold and lost itself in an opal-tinted mist where the bay joined Mississippi Sound. A low-hulled blockade-runner moved slowly past the point where the lighthouse towered.

Through the early fall of 1862, in sleepy Columbus on the Tombigbee, Whipple had had the odd sensation that it would be quite possible to bury himself in that calm backwater and drowse out the war in comfort and ease. Now, in this unchanging old house, he caught, as he had caught before, that same feeling. He drew on his cigar and watched the play of light on the bay where sun and wind banded the water with amber and jade and ice-blue and black and rose. It was a holiday setting, an eternal holiday where day slipped into lazy day almost unnoticed. Below the balcony, West Water Street stirred to faint life under its double row of trees whose leaves, untouched by February, seemed incongruous to his northern-bred eyes. A few well-dressed men, a hoop-skirted woman or two, idled along, looking out toward the Bay. A single carriage turned off toward Magnolia Street, two parasols bobbing on the rear seat. A loose-stepping Negro, basket over his arm, told in a deep-voiced chant of the excellence of his deviled crabs.

Whipple had rehabilitated himself in Mobile to the extent of winning public endorsement from Governor John Shorter, obtained not only by the representations of secret Union sympathizers but also by the affidavits feverishly executed by a few army officers and

officials whose misdeeds and speculations had come to Whipple's knowledge through his business dealings with them. Then, too, some of the letters and data furnished him back in Huntsville had proved their worth. Through Whipple's use of them, supplies had come into Mobile, none very vital and in no large quantity, but enough to underscore his bona fides and to give promise of more.

The resultant fees, based on honest goods honestly delivered, he had no scruple about accepting and he used them to bolster up the resources with which he had been provided at the start. As for John St. John, there had been no sign of him since that hot day in the pinewoods about Plantation Knob station.

Whipple knocked ash from his cigar and watched the sun turn a schooner's canvas to deep yellow while he wondered if he would do well to make another trip down to Mexico, to Matamoros again or even to Tampico. At Matamoros in early December he had met two exiled Polish colonels who were brimming with a plan to bring over from Macedonia an army of fifteen thousand of their compatriots, flotsam of an unsuccessful revolution against the Czar, in return for expenses and grants of land sufficient to set up a Polish enclave in the Confederacy. If such a scheme were actually under way, Washington ought to hear of it at once. Still, there were a few loose ends along the north side of the Gulf that he wanted to tie up. There seemed no especial hurry with both armies in virtual winter quarters. Bragg's great sweep north had been checked at Perryville in October and further smashed at Murfreesboro in December.

Murfreesboro. Not too far from Shelbyville and War Trace where he had first seen Penn Grainger —

He turned sharply as a subdued rap sounded at his door. He stepped back into the room, calling, "Come in!"

The door opened on a tall, baggy-clothed man with an uneasy face, very broad above the eyes and narrow through the jaw. He moved jerkily across the threshold, closed and locked the door behind him. His hand trembled as he took off his Panama hat. Whipple nodded coldly to him. "Good evening, Mr. Kane. You've got something to show me?"

Kane nodded and sidled to a chair where he perched uneasily and asked in a raspy whisper, "Got gold?"

"For anything that's worth gold," said Whipple shortly.

Kane passed a crumpled bandanna over his face and blinked nervously. His head, arms, and legs moved incessantly as though invisible strings were jerking at his joints. He hunched his shoulders about his ears, his eyes glanced at all corners of the room, and his long fingers worked and wove. He whispered to the table top, "Ram."

Whipple dropped to a chair beside him. "Go on!"

"Gold," said Kane.

Whipple shook him and real terror came into the man's pale eyes. "I never buy sight unseen. You've dealt with me before," said Whipple.

Kane's hand, as though stirred by horrible, independent life, crept into his inner coat pocket, drew out carefully folded sheets. Whipple took them with an abrupt gesture and spread them out on the table. Then he flapped his palm on them. "What's all this?"

"Code," quavered Kane. "My own. The chief clerk keeps watching me." A moist, bony forefinger traced along the weird lines. "Keel gets laid down pretty soon. Maybe another week."

"Who's building it?" asked Whipple sharply.

Kane gave a quick start. "Not so loud. Please. It's Mr. Henry Pearce. At Selma, Alabama, of course."

"Go on," said Whipple.

"An armored ram. It'll be two hundred and nine feet long, with a beam of forty-eight. The shield for the battery and crew is seventy-eight feet, eight inches, eight feet high above deck, but the deck itself is only eighteen inches above water. I — I tell you, it was hard to get all this. How much —"

"You haven't given me anything yet. How's this shield built? How thick is it?"

Kane fingered his lips, his eyes never still. "It's white oak and yellow pine, twenty-three inches thick, set at a thirty-three degree angle. It's faced with two-inch iron plate, set in three layers. The — the drawings are at the Atlanta rolling mills now." Kane's voice died to a dry rustle. "A seven-inch Brooke rifle fore and aft. Four Brooke six-point fours for the broadside. They throw ninety-pound, one hundred and ten, and solid shot."

"Engined how?" asked Whipple.

"Got to take an engine from an old river boat." Something of

Kane's fear melted as technical details absorbed him and he spoke with increasing animation. "They figure on her doing ten knots, but they'll never get more than six out of her. She draws thirteen feet, on paper, and they'll try to get that down to ten. 'Nother thing. This Pearce, he's supposed to be good but he's designed the steering chains so they run outside the hull instead of under the armor. There they are, lying right out where a shot from a fouled horse pistol could jam 'em. And here's something else. Pearce, he gave the gun ports good, heavy armored shutters, but he's going to build 'em so they slide. Just let someone whop a ten-pound shot against them and they'll never slide again." Whipple made quick notes on a pad of paper.

"Now listen while I call this back to you." He read off the details rapidly. "That all right? Good." He got up and went to a closet from which he emerged holding a small bag and a packet of notes.

Kane's terror swooped down on him again and he began to twitch. "That's my money? Give it to me. I've got to get out of the country. They'll conscript me sure. I couldn't stand the army. I'd go mad."

Whipple dumped the bag and the packet onto the table, pushing them carelessly toward Kane. "Quit fussing. There's one hundred pounds British gold and one hundred dollars in Reb notes."

Kane hurriedly stuffed the money into his pocket, his trembling fingers making heavy work of buttoning his jacket. "When can I go? You said you'd arrange everything. You know you did."

"Get hold of yourself," said Whipple wearily. "If you go out into the streets jumping and jerking like that, the provost'll pick you up on general principles. Yes, I've fixed everything. Any night after sundown, go to Ian Tevison's office. You know where it is — Tevison, the Scotch factor. He'll —"

Kane's voice cracked. "Can I go tonight?"

"Didn't I say any night? Yes. Tonight or next week or next month. Tevison's water clerk'll row you out to the nearest British ship. She'll set you ashore in Havana or Jamaica or Bermuda — just as you like."

"Oh, I'll be all right now. Tevison's. Water clerk. I'll be all right. I'll be safe." He clutched at the door latch, swung out into the corridor, and Whipple heard his feet padding in uneasy haste down the stairs.

Whipple strolled to the balcony and watched Kane shamble off through the thickening dusk, his head weaving from side to side. "Poor devil," he thought. "Hell, I never thought signing up with Kinnyard would lead me into this."

A feeling of nausea swept over him as he looked out over the darkening bay. It had been one thing to come south under Mitchell's orders to try and link up the Southern Unionists. But with Mitchell's removal, the guiding force had been lost and the mission had changed almost imperceptibly into a hunt for military intelligence that had involved him in dealings like those with Kane. It was all very well to remind himself that many valuable bits of information had been discovered and passed through odd channels to the Union forces at New Orleans, to the armies that were now flowing slowly back over the territory given up to meet Bragg's sweep, to Washington and the various staffs and departments.

He lit a fresh cigar, but the first whiffs tasted rank and dry, increased his feeling of physical distress. Oh, for one whiff of the clean air of a blizzard instead of the cloying reek that came from the Gulf! Over country roads far in the north, sleighbells were jingling, bells in thick, rich-toned clusters like those on his father's best sleigh.

Somehow the thought of snow-mantled Ohio steadied him. It was a good land, worth living for and worth fighting for, it and all its sister states under the Union colors. Worth living for and fighting for. Then his mouth contracted sourly and dawning peace left him as he recalled how, not too long ago, counties and states and the people who made them up were merely to be used for one's own benefit and progress.

He spoke to himself fiercely. "Will you for God's sake shut up? Shut up or get the hell out of this! Get out and be a quitter! This isn't going to last forever!"

He snatched up a broad Panama hat, adjusted his stock before a mirror, and went down the stairs with a slow, even step, forcing himself to hum under his breath. Out in the street where occasional lamps burned feebly, he drove his mind into practical channels. What did Kane's ram mean? It could be used to break the blockade chain that lay closer and closer inshore. It could be sent west to the Mississippi where, even with all its faults as described by Kane, it could virtually cancel the wooden Union fleet. It could, in theory,

singlehanded beat off an amphibious attack on Mobile unless Farragut, off there at New Orleans, had managed to acquire an iron-clad or two. How long would it take to launch the new ram? Six months? A year? That was something that the navy people would know, and the sooner they had the whole story the better they could act to counter the menace of armor. Who could take the details to Farragut? Juan Angeles, the Mexican skipper now in port, was probably the best man.

Whipple breathed more freely. He felt that he had himself well in hand now, with his mind working steadily and easily. He walked briskly along, conning over what he himself had seen and what had been told him and coldly disregarding other thoughts that slid, unwelcome, into his mind. (Who is that man coming out of the corner house? Didn't that carriage slow down a little as it passed me? What's that man doing, lounging by the next street lamp? Is someone following me? That Negro just ahead. I've seen him before—or someone who walks just like him. How dark is it? Could a man on horseback recognize me?)

He slowed a little, eyes on the Negro just ahead. Did the Negro slacken his pace? Whipple walked still more deliberately. There was no doubt about it. The Negro had changed to a dawdling shuffle. Who was he? Where had Whipple seen him before? Yes! Aaron, the body servant of Major Giles at the Ordnance Office by the main wharf. It could be no one else.

Whipple glanced back over his shoulder with elaborate carelessness. One hundred yards behind him, just passing a street lamp, was an officer in gray, followed by a squad. A black cap of fear settled over him. Aaron must have been watching outside the pension, had seen Kane enter and leave. Then he had managed to keep just ahead of Whipple, having signaled to another watcher to send for the provost. But why not simply raid the house, with Kane present? Why gamble on a chase through dark streets?

No answers came to Whipple's mind as he turned quickly into the gloom of a side street that led away from the waterfront. His heart jumped in alarm as he saw the Negro swing back and follow him. In the distance he heard a shout, knew that the boots of the detail were clumping faster. A black mass loomed under the trees ahead of him. A horse whinnied and stamped a hoof.

Whipple was nearly abreast of the carriage before he realized its potential menace. There might be armed men about it, single mounts close by. He veered sharply into the street and the carriage turned with him, cutting him off. He snatched at the bits with a vague idea of forcing the horses to back until they upset the light carriage.

Then from the rear seat a voice called, low but tense, "Whip! Oh, Whip!"

All strength seemed to leave him. He stood staring at the slight figure in the carriage, aware only of a soft glint of eyes and the suggestion of white teeth. Then the peril of the situation roused his mind. He caught at the side of the carriage, panting, "Penn! Get out of here. Right away!" He saw her hands reach toward him and drew back. "No! I mean it! Tell your driver —"

Penn slid quickly from the carriage and stood close beside him. "Whip! Listen to me!"

"No time! You just get going. Major Giles's Aaron was watching me and the provost's not far behind. They're close, I tell you!"

"Please! Please!" Penn's small hands caught at his lapels. "That was Lem keeping ahead of you. He's gone back to the corner to watch now. He was supposed to let you catch up with him at the little park and then bring you here, but you turned off."

"There's still the provost. Good God, do you *want* them to find you talking to me?"

"The provost makes his rounds every night at this time."

"But the horses! They turned across the road!"

She shook him gently. "They're my horses, so don't worry about them. They turned when they heard you break into the street on their off side. Do I have to tell an artilleryman that?"

Whip's breath went out sharply. "Then — then I'm just a — well, just a dumb fool. There really isn't any danger." His hands closed about her elbows, tried to draw her nearer. "Oh, Penn! This is worth being chased across three states. How'd you get here? Shall I be seeing you right along? There's a lot that we can do, real work." He laughed softly. "Now you're here I won't have a worry in the world." His arms slid about her shoulders, but she stepped back.

"Wait! Wait. Oh, Whip, there is danger. Real, dreadful danger.

And we haven't got much time. You've got to start back north. You haven't much more than four hours' leeway!"

Whip laughed again. "Four hours? That's a lifetime." He swept her into his arms. For an instant he felt her soft shoulders yield, felt her back curve inward, heard a tremulous sigh in his ear. Then her fists beat against his chest and she wriggled free. "Whip, it's more like four seconds. Oh, do behave and listen to me. My dear, my dear, I've just got to talk. They *are* coming for you. At midnight. And they mustn't find you. They mustn't find anything that'll show what you've been doing. You know how important that is without my telling you. There'll be infantry and cavalry around the house — real troops, not militia. And there'll be men from Richmond going over every single thing they find, not sleepy state officials."

Whip's arms dropped to his sides and he bit his lip. Then he said, "No. I can't go yet. I'll change my lodgings. In fact, I'll move right in with a Reb I know, a Captain Courtney."

Penn's bonnet shook in the dimness. "Courtney will be expecting you. And don't even think of going to the Englishman, Raikes. No, you've got to go north."

"Penn, darling, I'm expecting sketches of the Mobile forts, the —"

"I know you are and you're supposed to be expecting them. But you'll never see them and this time you can't possibly talk your way out. You've got to move. Now! At once!" Whipple could see her clenched hands shaking in urgency. "Can't I make you *see*?"

"You're sure of all this?"

Penn's face turned up toward him in the gloom. "I'm sure, Whip, because I made the plans."

"*You* made the plans?" The question seemed jolted out of him.

"That's how I'm so sure. In the fall I found out they'd put a special man on your case. I've been staying with relatives of his for the last three weeks. They have the big plantation Mon Repos between here and the Pascagoula. He's been there and he's talked a lot. He knows all about you, about the Andrews raid and the telegraph at Plantation Knob, when you sent the news about Bragg's move into Kentucky."

"You heard that from him? Not hearsay?"

"Of course. And he's been in Biloxi, seeing various people. He

told me you hadn't seen him. Then we got talking about how you'd be taken and I made the plan. He seemed to like it and — ”

“How'd you get to Mon Repos?”

“The same way I've gone to other places, Whip. Anyway, he said my way was smarter than anything a man could think up and he'd use it.”

“Seems to have done an awful lot of talking,” muttered Whip.

Penn hesitated. “Why — yes — we did talk a good deal. It — it seems he wants me to marry him. His name's John St. John.”

“He — what! Wants you to *marry* him? John St. John? Why, he — well — What did you tell him?”

Her voice dropped still lower. “That I couldn't make up my mind. I told him he mustn't hurry me and — Oh, Whip, I *had* to. Don't you see? Otherwise I wouldn't have known a thing, found out a thing. And — and — oh, Whip, I have missed you so!” Her head was against his shoulder and her breath came convulsively. His arms closed gently about her.

“Take it easy, dearest. Guess I know a little of what it took. Just take it easy. This war isn't going to last forever.” He looked down at the top of her bonnet that was pressed tight against him, saw that a small hand had closed hard on his lapel. “You've done enough. Time you got a furlough, at least. Lord! And all the time I thought you were up around the Ohio. You missed me! Tell me that again, Penn. I've been missing you — maybe worse because I didn't really know I mattered much to you. You must have known about me.”

She whispered, “Didn't you think I meant that good-by at the Quigleys', Whip? But I kept on meaning it more the longer you were gone. I never thought I could feel like that about anyone. I never thought I'd be saying things like this to anyone — ever again.”

Whip's fingers lay gently against the soft curve of her cheek and he slowly raised her head. “But you're going to keep right on — and about me.”

She whispered, “Yes, Whip! Oh, yes!” and her arms crept up tight about his neck. The dark, silent street seemed to swing slowly about him as he knew the pressure of her lips, felt her slim body strain against his.

Suddenly she raised her head, leaned back a little. "Whip! What was that?"

Whip looked up unsteadily, his ears singing. Down the street he caught the beat of a slow tread, the ghost of whistling. The tune was familiar. "Ven ve lif in dot house mit der gable, Bei der vine-cladt banks von der Rhine." Whip laughed against her cheek. "Lem. That's an old battery song he got from Tom and me. Is he warning us about anything?"

"No. But he ought to be. Time's getting away from us, Whip. Now listen, please. Just a minute. Go home and clean up all your papers. Then —"

"You'll wait here while I do it?"

"Darling, I can't. You see, the plans were for tomorrow and then St. John changed them for tonight. I borrowed the carriage and drove over here. I'll have to start right back because it's nearly ten miles. Even so, they'll wonder. You get rid of everything. Then you go on foot out the north road. You know the Willcox place? Well, you go straight to the overseer's house in the live-oak grove, rap on the door, and tell the man who answers that you've lost your way. He'll pass you right on up the state to the nearest Union lines."

Whipple rubbed his chin. "I'd do a lot better, *I* think, by shipping out with Juan Angeles and going aboard one of the blockading fleet. Or straight west to Baton Rouge. And I've got some things for Farragut."

She caught his lapels again. "No, Whip. No! Neither way. It's all blocked now. Mine is the only way."

"But Farragut —"

"He'll *never* get what you have, if you try your way. Is it important?"

Whip quickly explained what he had obtained from Kane. Penn nodded. "You've got the notes with you? Give them to me. There are ways that I can send them on."

Whipple ruffled his hair. "Lord, then there's the Mobile matter and — oh, about twenty other things."

"Keep them in your head till you're inside our lines. I tell you, St. John's in earnest."

Whip scuffed his boot in the soft dirt. "Yes. That's the devil of it. St. John's got brains. If it were anyone else —"

"But it isn't," said Penn quickly. "Now you've got to go. Do just what I said."

"I will," said Whip reluctantly. "But look here — how about you? If St. John begins to suspect you —"

"Don't worry. He's got one weak spot and I happen to be it. Besides, I'll be leaving Mon Repos in a day or two."

"And going where?"

"My darling, can't you see that it won't matter to me *where* I go if you don't hurry?"

She was in his arms again while he whispered, "You'll wait, dearest, you'll wait." Then he lifted her gently into the carriage and strode down the street. By the corner Lem materialized. Whip held out his hand. "Good luck, Lem, and take care of Mrs. Grainger."

Lem returned his grip. "Don't need a heap of takin' care of. Good luck to you." Then he vanished toward the carriage as Whip walked swiftly back to the old stone house, thinking with satisfaction of Lem. From the hopeless waif who was dragged out of Swims's jail for floggings, he had developed into a useful, intelligent worker, into a free man in the best sense of the word. James Andrews would have liked to know that that change was one of the fruits of the escape venture that had cost him his own life.

The days began to jerk past Whip in an uneasy, feverish pattern. From Willcox's he was passed on by night toward the headwaters of the Pascagoula. A week later he was spirited into the strange town of Ellisville whose people had not only seceded from the Confederacy but were also carrying on a vicious guerilla warfare against any Southern troops in the neighborhood. From this tiny Union enclave in deep Mississippi, shifting groups of silent men, like the Tennessee pilots, guided him on.

February became March and March began to ebb. Whip felt that he had covered immense distances, that, had his guides been willing to steer a reasonably straight course, he would be beyond the Ohio by now. In the hills overlooking Meridian, Whip talked with two booted planters while their horses whinnied in a clump of budding laurel. Both strangers were plainly worried. The taller muttered, pulling at his beard, "Can't figure what's wrong, but something sure God is. A month ago, I'd have guaranteed to dress you in Union

uniform and ride you by daylight clear up the state. Now — well, I just don't know. I'd aimed to hand you on to Joe McCurdy. McCurdy went to Jackson on business two-three days back and ain't been heard of since."

"Been many strangers in the neighborhood?" asked Whip.

"Friend, a month ago I'd have known it if a dog scratched himself three counties away. Today, I wouldn't swear I had both my feet unless I could see 'em. What happened to the guides that were supposed to meet you at Quitman? How come the ferry at LeFlore Creek was stove in? Where's Joe McCurdy? It's like being in the middle of a storm you can't see, hear, or smell. But by God it's there."

"How about a straight run up to Columbus?" suggested Whip. "I made myself pretty solid there."

The tall man growled, "Yes, and if you showed in Columbus, you'd get a few ounces of lead to make you more so. Great day! Looky yonder!"

Across a dark valley, perhaps three miles away, a thin finger of flame wavered upward, swelled and thickened.

"A signal?" asked Whip.

"Yep. But not one we hone to see. That's Chatwood's cabin where you were going to lay up a day or two," said the squat man.

Whip felt weary disgust creep over him. "All right," he said. "Chatwood's is burned. It's your deal. What do I do?"

The tall man scuffed his hat back and forth on his head. Then he spat. "You better trail along with me. I got a horse here for you." He spoke to his companion. "You take your beast, Cade, and prowl Chatwood's. You'll catch us before sunup."

Whip rode on through the night woods. Deep depression settled over him as he saw that the trail he followed led west and south and west, taking him farther and farther from his goal.

Early April wrapped western Alabama in a cloud of flowering dogwood. Blossoms burst pink and white on round hilltops, filled deep valleys with tinted mist and hung low over streams where wet black rocks emphasized the delicate sprays that dripped over them.

Clinging to every trail that might lead north, Whip worked on, his ragged hat, his rough homespun and broken boots, dotted with

fallen petals. He had been alone since his last guide had deserted him three days ago. He had not eaten for twenty-four hours. His earlier urge to reach the Union lines as soon as possible had faded to a dull instinct of self-preservation, almost animal-like, that made him count as sheer gain each mile and each hour that he went on undetected.

The ground was growing steeper. There was a soft blue sky above him, a sun that pressed on toward noon as he stopped to drink at a stream that rustled past foam-edged boulders. When he had slaked his thirst, he straightened up and carefully wiped his beard. Then he sat back on his heels and studied the contours of the ground about him. His eyes were wary, crafty, as though depending on senses rather than thought.

Suddenly he muttered, "Hah!" and his expression changed. It was as alert as ever, but reason had replaced instinct, there was judgment, memory, cool calculation. He sat motionless for a moment, his vision playing over the great masses of red rock that showed just above the treetops straight ahead of him. He rose with a quick, assured movement and glided into a thicket, heading toward the mountain.

An hour later he lay in a clump of budding laurel and looked out onto a neat garden that stretched away to a big white house. Two Negroes were carefully spading a flower bed along a hedge. A third trimmed the turf about a sundial. An older Negro in a white coat stepped out through a French window in the house and ambled toward the spaders, calling, "You, Caleb! You aim to lay out them mint beds today?" Caleb rumbled some answer that seemed satisfactory and the white coat passed on, following a path that led by the laurel patch just outside the garden proper.

Whip edged closer and closer. When the Negro was a few steps away he called in a low tone. "Reuben! Oh, Reuben!"

The lined, weathered face of Penhallow's butler remained impassive and the ambling steps came to a natural halt. Barely moving his lips, he said, "Yessuh?"

Whip wriggled on. "It's Mr. Sheldon. Whipple Sheldon. I stayed with the major last summer."

"I ain't forgot, Mist' Sheldon. Major, he'll be right warmed to see you, suh."

"I don't dare show myself. Will it be safe for me to come to the house? I don't want to put him in danger."

"Danger? Ain't none for the major, Mist' Sheldon." Reuben bent down, plucked a spear of grass, and held it to the light as though admiring its deepening green. "Little gate in the garden, off to your left. Scroosh on through the laurel till you come to it. I'll be there."

Relief numbed Whip as Reuben opened the white gate and bowed him ceremoniously up a path that ran through a tunnel of high lilacs. He felt springy turf and firm flagstones under his feet, caught the scent of a flowering quince beyond the tunnel, heard the soft thud of Reuben's steps behind him. He did not wait for the butler to glide past him, but opened the narrow door and stepped into the hall of the house where mahogany and white stairs curved gracefully upward. Someone coughed in the living room to the right and Whip went quickly in.

Major Penhallow stood before the fireplace, a tumbler in his hand and one elbow crooked behind him. His dark glasses turned toward Whip. "Your visit is a pleasure, sir. I don't see as well as I used to and as Reuben doesn't seem to be here, I'm afraid I shall have to ask you your name."

Whip felt a sudden tightening in his throat at the sight of the gallant little figure. He came forward, hands out. "Major Penhallow! I wouldn't have come in if Reuben hadn't told me it was safe. You swear there's no danger to you? I—"

Penhallow's glass smacked onto the mantel with a crisp little thump and Whip's hands caught his. "My boy! I've worried about you. You're all right? You were quite lost to sight. Not a word of you, not from any quarter. And where else would you come but here?" He gave Whip's hands a quick little shake. "Danger or no danger, it was your duty to call on me. For anything." His grip tightened a little and his fingers ran over Whip's cuffs. "H'm. Cal-luses. Homespun coat. Been running it a little thin? Now sit down. Tell me what I can do for you."

Whip briefly sketched out Penn's warning, his flight from Biloxi and the sudden dislocation that made travel difficult over the secret routes that should have been simple.

Penhallow nodded when Whip had finished. "I see, I see. I'd had a hint or two. We'll have to do a little thinking, my boy. First—" He

raised his eyebrows and smiled as Reuben came into the room. "That's right. A good glass of bourbon to help us with that thinking. A cigar? Reuben, you'll see that Mr. Sheldon has everything that he wants."

Reuben set a deep cup of soup, thick, creamy, with crusts floating in it by Whip's elbow. "Figger'd Mist' Sheldon might better eat 'fore he touch any bou'bon, suh. Looks like he'd been feedin' off the ribs of Death's horse."

"Right, Reuben. We'll feed him up and get him rested here and then we'll see about getting on, won't we?"

Whip gratefully took the hot soup from its flowered cup and felt new strength and assurance coming back to mind and body. He glanced across at the major as he drank. Reuben, tray in hand, was passing back of the old man's chair.

Penhallow went on, "Reckon you'll be quite safe here. I'll put out a feeler or two."

Whip let the comfort of the major's presence, the cheer of the room and the hot food, soak through him. Reuben, too! There was strength to be gained just from his quiet solicitude. It was rather odd, though, that in passing the major's chair the butler had allowed his hand to rest for an instant on his master's shoulder, almost as though steadying himself. Penhallow seemed to notice nothing unusual, but went on in his pleasant voice, "Yes, we'll keep you as long as you like. Though — I wonder, how. You want to get back to the army as soon as you can, don't you?"

Whip cleared his throat. "I do have news. Some of it may not improve with age."

Penhallow sighed. "I'd hoped — but never mind. You're the better judge. When do you want to start? I can look after guiding you, anyway."

Whip said reluctantly, "It's past noon. I'd say the sooner the better."

"Then you shall go at once. Reuben, send for young Dan. He's to take Mr. Sheldon up beyond the fork of the Black Warrior by our old trail. He'll find Martin Somers up there and Martin will see about the rest of it. And have a game bag of food ready, right away."

Reuben bowed. "I told young Dan he'd better hang close to the

back door, and Huldah, she's fixin' a bagful right now. Reckon I can hear the buckles snappin' shut."

Penhallow rose. "There you are, Whip. I'd argue against you, but it would be pure selfishness. Reuben will see you off. Oh, this isn't a long good-by this time. The storm's rising and the next time I see you, you'll be rolling past my gate with your battery and I'll know that every coat on the road'll be blue and the flags I hear rustling will show the old colors. God bless you, Whip."

When Whip had gone, Penhallow sank back into his chair, chin on his chest and his old fingers drumming gently on the arms. A tall clock in the hall ticked on and ashes fell with a patter in the grate. At last the major roused himself and called, "Reuben!"

The butler appeared in the wide door. "Yes, suh?"

"How long has Mr. Sheldon been gone?"

"Not mo'n ten minutes, suh."

"You said there were five?"

"Five, suh. Way down the valley. Comin' hard."

"Mounted?"

"Yes suh. I tapped your shoulder twice for each man."

"And Mr. Sheldon's on foot. H'm." His fingers drummed on. Then he raised his head. "Reuben, My old cape. And the rosewood case."

Reuben looked gravely at him, turned and left the room. When he returned he held out a weather-stained blue cape. Its lining was cavalry yellow and the buttons that held the collar chain bore the Union eagles. Silently he held it out for the old dragoon, who let it settle about his thin shoulders.

"Now the case, Reuben."

The butler laid a shining wooden box on the table, opened it. Two ivory-handled revolvers lay in velvet beds, shining and deadly. The major's hands ran over them, closed about the butts, drew them out. "Fresh loaded, Reuben?"

"Yesterday, suh."

"Open the doors that lead to the south road. Point me in the right direction. Thank you. You may go, Reuben."

Penhallow threw back his head, walked steadily and surely toward the fresh air that was pouring into the room. His polished boots cleared the threshold neatly and he walked across soft grass that sent

a smell of spring to his nostrils. He kept on, head slightly cocked, as though listening. When he heard the hoofbeats he halted, turned a little to face the sound as squarely as possible. He raised his voice in the old, old challenge, "Halt! Who goes there?"

He heard the hoofbeats louder and louder, heard them stutter to a full stop. Someone off to his left, hidden in the eternal milky cloud bank that veiled his eyes, shouted, "Hell, it's jes' ol' Penhallow. Git in an' shake his house up. Maybe the Yank's hidin' thar an' he don't know it."

A gentler voice spoke. "Sorry, Major. Army orders. We're after a spy and he was spotted heading this way. Of course, I'd take your word for it, but orders say 'Search.'"

Penhallow felt the old cape billow about him, felt the touch of the eagle buttons just under his chin. "You will stay where you are."

Someone laughed, jeeringly. "So *you* say. Git goin', boys. If he gits hurt, it ain't our fault."

Penhallow heard leather creaking and bits jingling. He called in a steady voice, "This land is under the flag of the United States. Those in rebellion against that flag set foot on it at their own risk." His veined, spotted right hand raised its revolver, slowly lowered the muzzle.

Then behind Penhallow a voice spoke quietly. "Shoulder high, suh. Hand's breadth to the right."

The major said, "Reuben, I told you to remain where you were." As he spoke, the revolver slammed and over the echo Penhallow heard an oath and a crash.

Again the voice spoke. "Hip-high, suh. Dead front."

"You will return to the house at once, Reuben." This shot was swallowed up in a series of ripping blasts. The old man staggered, recovered, and began firing with both hands. He felt oddly light, a sort of gay lightness. The milky cloud before his eyes grew brighter, the smell of young grass was rich. His voice soared up, young and strong in his own ears—"Bugler! Sound the charge! Squadron A, follow me!"

There was one shot remaining in the revolver clutched in the left hand. It troubled Reuben that he had to use force to pry open his master's stiffening fingers, but he knew that he had to hurry. Twenty yards away a man was aiming at him. One more shot. It

would give Mr. Sheldon just that much more time. He whispered, " 'Scuse me, Major, suh. Got to hurry."

When the posse, on its way to search the house, edged furtively past the bodies, men looked down from their saddles at the revolver about which two dead hands, one white and one black, were clasped. Then they turned away, dazzled a little by the sun which struck full on the cape buttons with the golden eagles of the Union.

Martin Somers, agile despite his clubfoot, pulled himself to the crest of the low ridge, going hand-over-hand by means of the young white birches that grew thick on the slope. Whip panted up beside him and looked west onto a long stretch of rolling country where open fields alternated with thick patches of woods. He studied the course of a stream that wandered lazily south. Somers bit the corner from a plug of tobacco and tucked it in his leathery cheek. "Mississippi," he said tersely. "We're past the Alabama line."

"Safe to head north yet?" asked Whip, rubbing his chin that was still tender from the removal of his beard four days before.

"Safer'n a possum in a chunk hole," said Somers, his jaws working slowly and contentedly as the juice of his plug began to flow.

Whip frowned. He said slowly, "Maybe so. But I'm going to stick to cover until I hear someone in blue yelling my name in a roll-call. Let's eat up a few miles before noon. We ought to—" He suddenly jumped, flung his arms in the air. "Look!" he yelled. "Down there by the oak grove. See! Where the stream bends. You can start home right now. Just look at 'em. Blue, by God, blue!"

He pointed to the clump of trees, not three miles away. On the near bank, men in blue uniforms, a squad of them, were leading their mounts to water. Even at that distance, Whip could make out scabbards, the gleam of well-tended carbines. He shouted to Somers, "Want to come down and have a close look at 'em?"

Somers sat down slowly, rested his chin on his bony knees. "Ain't seen nothing like that since the war busted out. Abe Lincoln's boys. Mister, I dassn't go nigher. It'd be like stuffin' a starved man with cracklin'. No. I'm goin' to sit right here and stare so hard they can feel it. Then I'm goin' home and do the God-damnedest lot of prayin' that ever cut loose in the State of Alabama. Hump yourself, friend. You got rough miles to drag them feet."

Whip held out his hand. "Then good-by, Mart. You've done a great job, slipping me through. Tell Major Penhallow we'll be rolling past his house before he knows it."

He left Somers still crouched among the birches, eyes fixed on the distant blue troopers.

The descent was easier than Whip had expected. A long shallow draw led down onto the plains where the stream twisted its lazy course and a live turf seemed to make running almost effortless.

When he was about fifty yards from the squad he began to shout and wave his arms. Those blue kepis! The group blurred before Whip's eyes and he choked as he tried to shout again. Then the troopers saw him and unslung their carbines with easy skill.

Whip ran faster. "Sergeant! Hi, Sarge!" his voice cracked with excitement. "Drop those guns! I'm Union!"

The muzzles of the carbines lowered slowly as Whip ran up to the squad. He reached out and grabbed the sergeant by the shoulders. "By God, I never thought I'd see blue again! Where's your outfit?" He thumped the sergeant's broad back, shook his hand.

The sergeant, bearded to the eyes with copper-colored hair, backed away. "Wait a minute. Union, are you?"

Whip whooped with laughter. "Where the hell did you think I was from? The Coldstream Guards? My name's Sheldon, Whipple Sheldon. Top soldier, Kinnyard's Ohio Battery."

The sergeant's eyes narrowed and he stepped nearer. "What you say the name was? Whipple Sheldon? You the one that was with Jim Andrews?"

"I was one of them."

"Jim Andrews, out'n Flemingsburg?"

"That's where he came from," said Whip.

The rest of the squad drew closer. The sergeant turned to them. "Hear that, boys? Whip Sheldon. Him that was with Andrews. Don't that beat hell!" He clapped Whip on the shoulder. "We all heard about you!" The other men began to laugh and Whip laughed with them. "Going to see that I get right to H. Q.?" he asked.

"We be. We sure be."

"What's your outfit? Where are you based?"

"Detail out'n Grierson's cavalry. Base at LaGrange, but we range ample."

"Ample enough for me," laughed Whip. "Going to start soon?"

"Quicker'n you could bust an egg," said the sergeant. "Saddle up, boys. Lou, you give Sheldon your horse."

Girths were tightened and Whip mounted a goose-rumped black, pacing it beside the sergeant. The copper-beard talked on about camp gossip, but the names of the men of the western armies, other than Grant and Sherman, were not familiar to Whip. He asked about military operations, but found the sergeant very vague.

The squad were all Kentuckians, which doubtless explained their familiarity with Andrews's name and exploits. They seemed a good-humored, easy-going lot, laughing uproariously among themselves as they rode on, crossing the stream by a narrow bridge.

"Going to ride me clear back to LaGrange? Right across the Tennessee border?" asked Whip.

The sergeant shook him gently by the collar. "Now don't you fret 'bout us. We got to report. Maybe you'll stay with us, maybe you won't. But *he*'ll see you get where you ought to go." He turned in his saddle and looked back at his men. "R'ar up a bit, boys. We're curvin' in."

Whip rode beside him into the yard of a small, unpainted house set among dying pines. "This the place?" he asked.

The sergeant chuckled. "Sure is." He dismounted and tethered his horse to a hitching rail by the splintery veranda. "Come on in and we'll report."

Whip followed him into the warp-doored house that seemed bare of furnishing save for a few shaky wooden chairs. The sergeant jerked his thumb toward a room at the left. "Better wait in there. Won't be but a minute."

Whip entered the room with its stained whitewashed walls and strolled up and down with his hands in his pockets. His whole chest quivered with suppressed joy and excitement. One of the squad lounged in after him, whistling "Listen to the Mockingbird." Out on the porch, close by the window, a second trooper picked his teeth and stared morosely over the fields.

Whip turned to face the door as he heard the sergeant's clumping tread followed by a lighter, firmer step. Out in the hall a languid voice drawled, "So you didn't like Biloxi, Mr. Sheldon?"

Into the room, immaculate as ever in snuff-colored coat and fawn trousers, strolled John St. John.

Whip jumped toward the wall, put his back against it, calling to the sergeant, "Arrest that man. He's a Southern agent."

The sergeant pulled a long face. "Southern? Well, if thet don't beat all. You ain't told me you was Southern, Mr. St. John."

St. John said quietly, "That's enough, Sergeant. Keep a guard at the door and the windows. Have the other horses brought around. I want to talk to Mr. Sheldon a little and then we'll start. Pull up a chair, Mr. Sheldon." He pointed to a cane-bottomed wreck near the fireplace, seated himself in its mate and lit a cigar. Then he carefully drew out a small, heavy pistol and laid it negligently across his knee.

The shock of seeing St. John, the true identity of the troopers, suddenly sharpened Whip's mind. He sat down easily and crossed his legs. "The name is Sherston, Mr. St. John. I have every reason to resent this detention. Also that small cannon you're dandling there. But I think I know you well enough to realize that you merely made a mistake. Put your artillery away, call off that guard and we'll talk sensibly. I assure you I'll hold nothing against you."

St. John waved his cigar airily. "Kind of you, I'm bound to say. Yes, I have made a mistake. Not one, but a great many. Else I shouldn't have had to spend so much of the best part of the year trying to trail you down. That business at Plantation Knob was very well done." He drew carelessly on his cigar, flicked off a bit of ash. "I presume you know we hanged Malley, the telegrapher? No? You're surprisingly ill-informed."

Whip's stomach contracted as he recalled his last sight of the fat Malley, reeking with spilled whisky and singing "Wake up, Jacob, day's a-breakin'" as he staggered back to the station to outface St. John. He shook his head to ward off the past and to concentrate on the present.

"I suppose what you're saying has at least some meaning to you. It hasn't for me," said Whip, trying to match St. John's detachment.

St. John smiled. "You've had good helpers. Yes, very good. And devoted ones. It was a pity about Major Penhallow, of course, but it couldn't be helped."

Whip gave an involuntary start. "He's—I don't know of any Pen—whatever the name is."

"Dear me," said St. John. "Then it wouldn't interest you to learn that to let someone we were looking for escape, he shot down two of a posse of mine. It seems probable that that someone never even knew the posse was closing in, or else, being quixotic, he might have stayed and helped the major shoot it out. Two determined men, back of shuttered windows, could have done a lot and possibly have gotten away. The major didn't seem to want to gamble on that, though."

Whip jammed his clenched fists into his pockets. "What's all this got to do with me?"

St. John held up his hand. "My dear Mr. Sheldon! Have you forgotten how warmly you greeted Sergeant Kennefick and his men? You see, we were able to plot your course quite well as soon as you got near the Black Warrior. We set a line of traps, blue traps, across the country. You were bound to see one and run into it. There is one thing that I wish you'd tell me, since it must be quite obvious to you that you've come to the end of your — ah — well, let us say course, rather than the usual word which might have unpleasant connotations. Just why did you leave Biloxi when you did? Why not earlier? Why not later?"

Whip got up and St. John followed him with a lithe movement, pistol ready. Whip gestured at it with as much carelessness as he could muster. "Put that damned thing away. I'm not going to talk any more. I demand to be brought before Governor Shorter. I demand to see the nearest British Consul."

St. John said languidly, "You mustn't be surprised if your persistence amuses the authorities in Richmond when we get there."

"Richmond?" asked Whip. "You're not taking me to Montgomery?"

"To Richmond. Matters move rather more efficiently there, and besides, there are a good many people who'd like to talk to you."

Whip drew a deep breath. Richmond was far and could hardly be reached by any very direct route from this corner of northeast Mississippi. Somewhere along the way, the chance to escape would show itself.

It was lucky, Whip reflected as he rode along, that the journey would take a good many days. Now, at the very start, there seemed

little immediate chance of escape. He had St. John on one side of him, Kennefick on the other. The four troopers trotted in the rear, their carbines slung easily across their saddlebows ready for instant action. The habit of past months came to his aid and he managed to talk to St. John with a reasonably convincing nonchalance while his mind worked on behind the protecting screen. He nodded toward Kennefick and said, "Aren't your boys running quite a risk? Supposing they're captured in Union uniform."

St. John shrugged. "You people have no monopoly on blue cloth. As to the buttons and cap ornaments, they'll be cut off at the first halt. I insisted on them as I paid you the compliment of assuming you'd be too sharp-eyed to miss them. Oh, it's Union cloth all right. Your QMC looks after us very well. We outfitted a lot of troops after Van Dorn sacked your base at Holly Springs. When we've given you people the final push—it won't be hard, you know; you've got no real soldiers—and we set an indemnity, I think it would be only fair to deduct from it the value of what we've captured from you." He laughed shortly.

Whip forced a smile. "Your reasoning's ingenious. But what the South ought to be praying for is its own quick collapse."

"Yes?" said St. John with a mocking grin.

"Surest thing you know. You say you're fighting for your independence, don't you?"

"Some say so. And why not?"

"If you should win, which you won't, you'll lose the last trace of independence you ever had. It's a sure thing. Your eleven states won't be able to stand alone. You'll reject the North. England will step in with a nice friendly alliance with you and then where will you be? You're done. Her only interest in you will be in a supply of cotton. She'll guarantee to protect that supply, not you. And she'll ask a mighty stiff price for that protection. You'll rate less than a mere colony and by God you'll pay and pay for every British pound and every British ship and every British soldier that their guarantee involves. You'll get damn tired of that. You'll try to play France off against England. You'll take advantage of the new industries in Prussia that need your cotton."

"My, my," said St. John, smoothing his mustache. "You frighten me."

"I don't wonder," said Whip. "I'd be damn scared, too, if I were Secesh — and looking ahead. There's France with a nice toehold in Mexico. Russia'll begin to reassert its claims to California, and they're not bad ones, either. Sure, I'd be scared, and that's only the start. Can't you see a block of states, say, Mississippi and Alabama and Louisiana and so on, tying up to France while your seaboard states start howling to London? I can. God knows you're snapping at each other right now."

"Your idea of world politics is somewhat naive," drawled St. John. "Besides, you can't have read our constitution. No state can secede."

"Oh, of course, of course," said Whip. "But — what the hell's going to stop it? If you win, constitution or no constitution, you established the rightness of secession. Look here — Louisiana feels that it's left out in the cold. It deals itself out of your little poker game and yells to France for help. Right there, your whole Confederacy's done — once and for all."

"Most interesting to get an outside point of view," smiled St. John lazily. "Now we'll pull in just beyond that next bend in the stream where we'll find the patrol that you would have run into if you'd crossed a little to the south."

There was no doubt of the thoroughness of St. John's preparations. As the day wore on, other groups of horsemen in Union blue were met and rather disdainfully dismissed by him, he being content to rely on the original contingent as a guard.

Toward sundown St. John reined in abruptly. Far off to the right, beyond low hills, a patter of musketry beat the air, followed by the unmistakable flat bark of a three-inch piece. Whip stiffened in the saddle. The sounds continued, regular and sustained. St. John looked across at Kennefick. "Know what that means?"

"Yuh!" said Kennefick. "It's folks shootin'."

St. John cursed the sergeant in a slow, biting drawl while Whip sat tense, hope beginning to spring up in him.

"Where's the next of our posts?" asked St. John.

"'Bout a mile yonder," said the sergeant sullenly.

"Send a man down there. Right away. See if they've got news. Tell him to get back quick."

A trooper galloped off and the group sat its mounts, listening

to the swell of small arms and the slam of cannon. Whip kept his eyes on the horizon, his whole being alert for some sign that would set him free. The man seemed to take an eternity. When he reappeared, still galloping, around a bend of the road, Whip instinctively gathered his horse. St. John and Kennefick caught his reins at once. "Easy," said St. John. "I don't recommend any sudden moves. These men have their orders."

The trooper reined in close by St. John. "Hey! Hell's to pay. The Yanks is out."

"How do you know?" snapped St. John.

"The fellers down there. An officer come up. He'd rid clear over Hambone Ridge. He wanted the fellers to go back with him, but they said they ain't got orders to."

"Are the Federals in force?"

"Godamighty, I ain't seen 'em, but they said it was all Grierson's cavalry and some guns and ain't he plowin' along! Some Yanks, maybe a thousand, swung this way and they're makin' toothpicks out'n the railroad beyond Hambone."

"Well!" said Whip softly. "*Well!* Another Yankee muddle, Mr. St. John!"

St. John flushed angrily. Then he smiled, a cold, slow smile, and bowed. "Which, I fear, you will not have the pleasure of witnessing. I confess this does disarrange my plans. We shall have to find a way east and then south again."

Dusk crept lower as the squad rode on, the troopers closing tighter about Whip. He rode on in silence, head cocked toward the firing that rose and fell in the west. He judged from the sounds that a body of men was trying to complete some piece of work while holding off, apparently with little trouble, an attacking force.

The road died quite abruptly as the last rays of the sun lay on the western treetops. St. John reined in. "Know this road, Kennefick?"

"No," grunted the sergeant. "Last post's down the fork we passed three mile back. I ain't never been this-a-way."

St. John sat motionless. Then he said, "There's a light up there. A house. Find the owner. Bring him here."

"Suppose he ain't wantin' to come?" asked Kennefick.

"You'll make him want to. Send one of your men."

In ten minutes time, a lean, stooped farmer stood before St. John, hat in hand. The latter asked sharply, "How can I go east from here?"

"Ain't no road, mister. Mebbe if you go back a piece and hit the west fork of this here road, now —"

"I said *east!*" said St. John. He looked almost apologetically at Whip. "These clay-eaters! So God-damn thickheaded you wonder they ever learned how to breathe." He turned to the farmer again. "East! I'll hit across country if I have to, but east I'm going. What's the best way? Or haven't you ever been more than ten yards from your mud sill?"

"Been fur 'nough to learn to talk polite to strangers, friend."

"Speak up, then," snapped St. John.

The farmer very deliberately turned his back on St. John and addressed himself to Kennefick. "I'll see you past my house. Then you follow a draw to the river. River's bridged. You won't hit no roads t'other side. Then you come to the Tallahatchie Ponds, two mile straight east of the river. Ponds is nigh fifteen mile long, and there's four mile of swamp to each end. If you're wearin' to keep goin', I got an old scow moored you can cross in. Good land east the ponds and a south road beyond 'em."

"Find out where this scow is," said St. John. "I don't want to hit four miles of swamp at night."

The farmer gave careful directions to Kennefick and then shambling off without a backward glance. "Lead the way, Sergeant," said St. John.

The Tallahatchie Ponds were long and narrow, stretching far beyond eyeshot to right and left. On both banks, scrub wood grew dense and spears of grass freckled the dull gloom of the water. Kennefick dismounted and began nosing along the bank. Then he grunted, "Got her," and labored back to the group, towing a broad-beamed craft.

St. John dismounted. "Tether your horses to a sapling. All right, Sheldon. Dismount. Hold out your hands."

Whip dropped to the ground, surveying the scow with distaste. Even in the poor light he could see the glint of water in the bottom and measure its low freeboard. He shook his head. "I'm not going bound in that leaky wreck," he said.

St. John hesitated. "Then give me your word you won't try to escape."

"So long as I'm in the scow I won't try to escape. More I won't promise."

"That's good enough. Into the scow, the rest of you. Sheldon in the middle. I'll take the stern. Kennefick, in the bow. You two use those oars and poles. When we get to the other side we'll send two men back to swim the horses over. The rest will stay and guard the prisoner. Hurry it up."

Whip felt the boat sway and tip as he climbed in. Warm water lapped about his feet and the gunnel felt crumbly and rotten under his hand. St. John gave an order and the scow slid out over the greasy-looking water where sedges and lily pads brushed past the sides.

Whip sat motionless. For the moment he was bound by his word. When the other bank was reached, a quick break might be possible with the guard reduced by two.

The men poled slowly, streamers of rank mud clinging to the wet ends of their poles. St. John called from the stern, "Look where you're poling, you men. Keep it straight."

Kennefick said gruffly, "Farmer told me to look for a run that come in on t'other bank. Good landin', he figgered."

Whip, face to the stern, watched St. John. The unwelcome change of plans seemed to have shaken St. John out of his languor. His voice rasped and his motions were quick but uncertain.

The east bank was close now. Kennefick said hoarsely, "Head her a bit downstream. I'm lookin' for that run he talked 'bout."

The man at the nearer pole heaved. Then he gave a sharp cry as his pole plunged deeper and deeper. He staggered. Another man shouted. There was a clatter of boots, more shouts, and the scow, over-weighted, turned over in a slow splash.

Whip gasped as the water hit him, rose about his head. He struck out for the shore, not ten yards away. Then fear, vicious deadly fear, struck through him. He was not swimming. He was not in water. Legs, arms, and chest were buried in a thin viscous mud that seemed to have no bottom. He struck out wildly, lashed with his feet as well as he could, but the movement only drove him deeper. He opened his mouth to shout and a horrible porridge-

like mass slid over his lower lip. He tried to lunge forward, strained his chin upward, but the mud pressed harder and harder against him. To the right and left he was vaguely aware of dreadful, choking sounds, of thrashings as futile as his own.

He swung his arm ahead to the limit of its reach. His palm smacked on the slimy surface that gave no purchase. He felt cold, slick, watery mud creep to the lobes of his ears. He tried to shout again, his eyes straining toward the bank. His breath sobbed in his constricted chest and his temples pounded. He thought, "I won't end like this. I won't end this way." The mud rose higher.

There was something solid under his feet. He had stopped sinking. He pressed gently downward with his feet and felt his knees bend a little. He raised his arms high above his head and ventured one foot forward. Still solid. He must be on a ledge or on a rotten log that had sunk deep in the ghastly mud.

He managed another step, forcing his body along, sick at the thought of what losing his precarious balance could mean. One more step. He reached up, caught at an overhanging branch. Two solid points—the old log and the slender branch. The branch snapped in his hands and he started to slip backwards. He snatched again. His hands closed about bark that held firm. Little by little, he pulled himself ashore and crawled onto the bank where he lay panting.

Another choking sound, wet thrashings from the pond. Whip levered himself to his feet and looked out. Just ahead of him, the mud stirred horribly, settled, was still. Farther out, by a grass clump, a mud-stained hand clutched at empty air, went under. To the left there was sound and movement. The moon, just rising over the trees, sent a faint glow over the black surface. A rock? No. It moved. A head and an arm, moving in slow agony. Whip yelled suddenly, "St. John! I'll throw a branch out to you. Grab it. Then I'll break a longer one. Don't let your chin go under. Here. Catch." He snatched up the branch from the ground and threw it toward the ghastly black-featured head. A hand seized it. "That's right. Don't put too much weight on it. It'll just help balance you."

He found a thick, long branch, threw his weight against it. It snapped and he staggered up with it in his hands. "St. John! I'll come out as far as I dare. Grab the end of this."

Whip stepped back into the mud that rose waist high. With one hand he clung to a tree. With the other he reached out toward St. John. "Grab this. I'm anchored here all right." Again a hand reached, withdrew. Whip shouted: "God damn it, man, you can trust me. Catch hold."

He reached farther and farther. St. John's hand fumbled for the long branch and Whip felt the sudden tug of his weight as the fingers closed. The branch grew taut and Whip yelled encouragingly. Then little by little the tautness slacked off. He stood staring, still holding the useless branch with one hand while he kept his hold on the tree with the other. The surface of the pond was broken only by the spearlike tips of the sedges. Even the scow was gone, dragged under, no doubt, by frantic hands that reached for it.

Still staring, he floundered backward onto the shore where he lay, sick and panting, under the tree that had saved him.

Across the pond a horse whinnied, was answered by another. Whip raised his head and looked dully across the treacherous black surface scored by the bright path of the moon. The horses of the detail! And their riders? At this moment, every man of the squad was somewhere down in the slimy black depths not ten feet from the shore. They might still be living, might be slowly smothering in the horrible helplessness. He himself had tasted enough of their fate to be able to visualize their sufferings. He tried to shake off the thought. He had done what he could to save St. John, the one man within sight and reach. What followed was unavoidable.

The horses neighed again. The district seemed thinly settled, but sooner or later someone, the farmer who had directed the squad to the pond, would investigate. People might come down to the east side of the water. He pushed himself to his feet and moved uncertainly off through the woods, hoping to pick up the road that the farmer had mentioned. He could stay in rough country, keeping the road in sight like the needle of a compass guiding him north.

P A R T I X

Vicksburg

ALONG the Mississippi, the early months of 1863 had flowed on, relatively uneventful, with little to mark one day or one week or one month apart from its fellows. Ulysses S. Grant kept quiet, reflective eyes on the river and on what he held to be the key to it.

The key was Vicksburg, railroad link between east and west, whose high-sited batteries dominated the stream. By taking it, he would secure the right flank of all the Union armies of the west. He would make the river a Union stream from source to mouth, thus cutting the Confederacy in two. From it, he could strike east into Tennessee and on to Georgia, or south to Mobile on the Gulf, or to join Banks at New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Winter floods slowly ebbed. Dates took on meaning, and the unmarked flow of time ceased.

Slowly and carefully, step by step, Grant had reasoned how the river port might be taken. He would not attack from the north, would not play to the strength of the commander, Pemberton. The attack must come up from the south and strike in from the rear.

In mid-April, Porter's gunboats and transports slipped downstream under the muzzles of the Vicksburg guns. A few days later, most of Grant's army, far above the town, moved to the west bank and began a slow and steady march south. At the month's end, amply supplied by the ships that Porter had run down the river, divisions and brigades crossed from a west-bank port ominously christened Hard Times, some thirty miles below Vicksburg.

As May opened, the army rolled on north and east. It had to live on what it carried, for it was separated from its true base by heavy Confederate forces. Its brown-bearded commander accompanied it imperturbably, chewing at his inevitable cigar stump, seemingly unmoved by the knowledge that his plan flew in the face

of all accepted military theory. That it was based on common sense was enough for him.

The army flooded on past Port Gibson, reached the Big Black River, paused to gather itself, rolled calmly on.



An early May dawn found Kinnyard's battery trailing in the rear of the artillery of Crocker's 7th Division, the guns of MacMurray and Dillon and Armstrong and Clark and Zickerick. Tom, riding beside Kinnyard and the lead team of the first piece, saw that the sandy road was slanting more and more to the east. Already the Big Black was far out of sight to the northwest. To the left, thick columns of blue infantry kept more or less parallel to the march of the guns. To the right, knots of blue cavalry nosed through the country beyond the right flank. Kinnyard pointed to a platoon of troopers who trailed off toward the east. "Must be linking up with Logan's 3rd Division. They're supposed to be off there somewhere." He stood in his stirrups, suddenly alert. "Look at that! There's something that *isn't* supposed to be there!"

Tom stared at scattered clusters of gray or brown horsemen, beyond the farthest fringe of blue, who circled about, halting to fire and then drifting on. He shook his head. "Scouts and skirmishers. Can't bother us any."

"You're probably right," said Kinnyard. "Just the same, better double back down the column and warn the chiefs of section to be ready for action."

All through the morning, the Southern cavalry hung on the fringes of the march, never allowing the blue troopers to close with them. They appeared in twos and threes and tens, in groups that formed, melted, vanished, reappeared. Tom, shading his eyes during a halt, muttered to Kinnyard, "There's that same Jonah again. See him? He always comes into sight with a group and then busts loose from them."

"What Jonah?" asked Kinnyard.

"Over there. Three fingers from that white house. He's got a strawberry roan. That's how I've kept track of him. Get your glasses on him."

Kinnyard squinted through his glasses. "Got him now, I think. The one between the two blacks? A gray behind him?"

Tom whistled under his breath. "He's taking chances, lawful chances." He kept the strawberry roan in his lenses. The two blacks drifted out of sight and the gray darted off to the left. The roan came closer and Tom could make out the rider, a tall, long-legged man who seemed bearded, although it might have been the shadow of his hat. Suddenly there was blue in a clump of trees behind the roan. The rider swung his mount expertly and whirled off to the right, disappearing back of a fold in the ground, the blue riders circling in pursuit. There were a couple of shots, then silence.

"Got away," observed Kinnyard. "Here are our boys coming back."

"Never mind," said Tom. "You'll see him again. He'll — by *God!* They got him. Look, look, look! He's riding between those two corporals." He put away his glasses. "Well, it was bound to happen with him sticking his nose almost between our spokes like that. They're bringing him this way. Like to get a look at him."

The troopers were heading toward the road and Tom could see the prisoner more clearly. He had a ragged dark beard and was wearing a grayish jacket and brown trousers bound at the knee with twine. Tom grunted. "Ugly-looking bastard. Bet he was trying to get close enough to pick off an officer. Think he had his sights fixed on your monkey cap, Kinn?"

Kinnyard grunted. "Captains are never casualties. Lieutenants who used to be caisson corporals often are. What the devil's he trying to do? Get away?"

The prisoner seemed to be arguing with his guards. Suddenly he spun his horse about before his guards could catch at the reins and drove toward the battery. Kinnyard snapped, "Watch out!" and drew his Colt with a swift, snakelike movement.

Then, amazingly, the man dropped from the saddle and ran toward the pair, shouting, "Tom! Oh, by God, Tom! Kinn! Captain Kinnyard!"

Tom stood frozen. Then he yelled, "Whip!" and threw himself at the gray-brown figure, shaking him by the shoulders, slapping his back, shouting sentences that had no beginning and no end.

Kinnyard was gripping Whip's other arm, asking questions as fast as Tom. Panting and grinning weakly, Whip saw his friends, saw

the guns and the horses and the men, through a blur. Finally he threw up his hands. "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I'm back and that's all I care about." He dropped an arm about Tom's shoulder. "Just let me look for a minute. That's all I want to do. Just look!"

His eyes drank in the sight of the teams, lean but well groomed, the guns, the limbers, the caissons. The drivers and cannoneers recognized him and began to wave and shout. Even through the joy of his return, Whip noticed a new flavor to the column. A year ago, though the battery was highly promising, it had little action back of it. A year ago, the sight of him, returning, would have brought every man running to him. Now they shouted, waved, whistled — but they stayed by their posts.

Kinnyard said, "A good many new faces, Whip. We got a little shot-up at Perryville and Murfreesboro."

Whip shook his head. "It's still Kinnyard's battery." He faced the lean, spare man. "I suppose I'm on the rolls. What do you want me to do?"

Tom pulled at Whip's ragged hatbrim. "Do? We want you to talk and keep on talking. We —" He looked up, suddenly aware that Whip's captors were sitting their horses close by, half amused, half angry.

A boyish-looking sergeant said, "Excuse me, sir. I'll have to take that man to the provost. Orders, sir."

Kinnyard laughed. "Provost be damned. This is my old top soldier. I don't know how he got here and, officially, I don't care. But he stays right here. I'll write a line to show your captain." He scribbled hastily in a notebook, tore out the sheet and gave it to the sergeant. Kinnyard turned to Whip. "Now, young man. Talk!"

Whip, bridle over his arm, walked to the first piece and leaned against the off wheel of the limber. The drivers and cannoneers nearest him edged as close as they could. Whip sighed happily as old sounds and smells came to him — horseflesh and well-kept leather, metal warm in the sun, the gentle clink and thud as resting horses shifted or pawed lazily. "Well," he said, "I haven't a hell of a lot to tell. Old Stars sent me out to do a job and down at Biloxi I got word it was about time to come home so —"

"Biloxi?" said Kinnyard sharply. "But that's on the Gulf. We didn't have any troops there."

"Except for me," said Whip dryly. "Then I came up the state, got nabbed once, got away through — well, I guess you'd call it bullheaded luck. After that I ran smack into a whole force moving this way. I figured I was trapped, finished. Then I had an idea. The Rebs were doing some recruiting; bands and speeches and so on. So I walked into a town at night and enlisted. It was a good outfit, too. A. P. Thompson's 3rd Kentucky Mounted Infantry. We've come down from Jackson, scouting and skirmishing. I'd heard from some Wisconsin boys, prisoners, that the old outfit was around here. I figured I'd ride up with my Reb friends, then make a break and give myself up. That's about all there is to it."

Kinnyard and Tom exchanged glances. "All?" said Kinnyard. "You haven't started. What were you doing? How the hell did you get to Biloxi? How did you travel north and who got word to you? How did you nearly get nabbed and how did you get away?"

"Yes," said Tom. "And when you're through with all that, I've got about fifty more on my own hook to ask."

"I've got a few questions myself," Whip said. "I used to hear all sorts of things at Biloxi. How's your wound? Are you and Sharon married?"

Tom shook his head. "We were going to be. We're still going to be. She was coming home with Dad but she got some kind of word at Louisville and had to go away on a job. I joined the outfit at Memphis and had a letter from her there. She didn't know the outfit had been transferred over here and was going to look for us with Rosecrans. So — wait a minute. You heard about all that at *Biloxi*? Over the left! Kinn, I swear he's making it up."

Kinnyard was looking gravely at Whip. Then he said slowly, "You've been living deep in the South since last summer? You've kept your eyes open? Then Tom and I've got no business wasting your time. You've got to get to the corps commander right away and talk. Maybe you better go right up to Grant."

Whip nodded. "I've got plenty. Some of it won't keep, either. Whose corps are we in?"

"McPherson's, for the moment. He's one of the best. But wait till you see where we really belong —" He stopped abruptly. Along the column drivers and cannoneers had begun to shout gleefully, waving their kepis and pointing down the road.

"What's the trouble?" asked Whip.

"Wait and see," Tom answered.

The men were yelling louder. "Here he comes!" . . . "Yahooo! It's the old redhead himself!" . . . "Hey, Uncle Billy! Do we get furloughs when we take Vicksburg for you?"

Whip stepped away from the wheel and looked down the road. A tall officer was coming on at a smart trot, a few aides trailing after him. The men shouted louder, "Looky that ol' redhead burnin' through that li'l ol' black hat!" . . . "Yeeeeay, Uncle Billy!"

The officer came closer. Whip saw a lean, heavily lined face, partly masked by a close-cropped beard that looked like copper, stubborn nose and chin and piercing blue eyes under straight, reddish eyebrows. His hair, under the small, narrow-brimmed hat, glinted like his beard. The twin stars of a major general shone on his shoulders. "My God," said Whip. "Who's that?"

Before Tom or Kinnyard could answer, the general was upon them, scowling down at the horses and the well-oiled traces. He reined in and smiled unexpectedly, a smile that utterly changed his expression. There were understanding and humor and sympathy, a deep human warmth, in it. Without realizing it, Whip stepped closer as though to share in that warmth. The general spoke pleasantly. "Did you fill your limbers and caissons, Kinnyard?"

The captain saluted, and Whip noted that all the men within range were standing at attention. Kinnyard said, "All filled, sir, at Grand Gulf. No rounds expended to date."

The general went on. "I'm taking you back. You've done your job with McPherson. Report to me across the Big Sandy. You'll be with Tuttle's divisional artillery, Captain Spoor commanding. When they give Frank Blair back to me, you'll go over to him. That clear?"

"Quite, sir," answered Kinnyard. Then as the general gathered his reins, Kinnyard added, "And, sir, a man who's just rejoined us has a lot of information that I think is important enough for you to hear." He turned to Whip. "Just sketch out for General Sherman what you told us. This is Whipple Sheldon, sir, my first sergeant who's been on detached service."

Whip frankly stared. Sherman! The Shiloh man! The blue eyes met his, the smile gone from them. They seemed to probe deep into

Whip's very mind. Sherman turned to Kinnyard. "Sure he isn't one of those damned newspaper men? He looks tough enough, even without those Reb clothes." The eyes swung back to Whip. "Well, speak up. I'm in a hurry."

The blue gaze was so intense that Whip stammered a little as he began, "I've been south on a detail for General Ormsby Mitchel. He sent me last summer. Since mid-April I've been serving with Gregg's brigade."

Sherman cut in impatiently. "Never mind the record. What have you been hearing?"

"A lot, sir. General Johnston's coming to Jackson to take over command. He'll have about twenty-five thousand men when they all get there. Some of them won't have any equipment, especially the artillery. They expect to draw on Vicksburg, but Pemberton hasn't got enough to spare any."

Sherman leaned his arms on his pommel. "How do you know?"

"I heard a QM colonel swearing about it two nights ago."

"And where was the colonel?"

"In Jackson, sir. And Pemberton's been getting orders from Jeff Davis as well as Johnston. They're contradictory. Johnston's telegraphed him to unite his forces and hit General Grant. Davis tells him to hang onto Vicksburg and Port Hudson."

"What's he going to do?"

"He's figured on holding the line of the Big Black and then hitting at our line of supply. He's also going to keep open the railroad between Jackson and Vicksburg. He and Davis still think the whole move is just a raid, like Grierson's last month."

Sherman snorted. "Our line of supply? We haven't got any." He looked harder at Whip. "Seems to me that for a high private you've been doing a lot of listening."

Whip nodded. "It's there to listen to."

Sherman straightened up and called over his shoulder, "Give this man a horse. He'll come with us to headquarters. Oh, you've got a horse? Then come right along. I'll send him back to you, Kinnyard. Ready, Sheldon? Better strip off that Reb coat or someone from the *Herald* will see us and write that I've gone over to Jeff Davis."

The general started off at a trot, motioning Whip to ride beside

him. "Now, young man," he said, "we won't talk any more till we get to headquarters. Use the time getting everything and everyone you've seen clear in your mind."

Headquarters was a sag-roofed cabin with horses picketed behind it. Sherman tossed his reins to an orderly and went up the creaking steps with long-legged ease. "Right in here, Sheldon. What's the next thing I've got to do, Pitzman?"

The young captain answered, "Nothing until the appointment at two, sir."

"Then keep people shooed away from me until I call for you. Tell the mess sergeant to have something ready for Sheldon when I'm through with him. Close the door, Sheldon."

Whip followed Sherman into a dingy whitewashed room where decaying wooden furniture stood on an uneven floor. Sherman opened a box, drew folded maps from it, selected one and spread it out on the table. Then he slung his hat on a peg and took a chair, sitting very erect and alert with his hands on his knees. He pointed a long finger at the map. "Take me for a walk. Show me every place you've been and every person you've seen. Don't skip anything."

Whip, drawing up a chair, felt the corners of his mouth twitching. Despite the general's intentness, despite the beard and the weather-beaten face there was something oddly boyish about him, from the very set of his feet to the unruly tuft of red hair that jutted up like a mallard's tail from the back of his head. He turned his attention to the map, which showed in fine detail the terrain between Jackson in the east and Vicksburg in the west, a span of some forty miles. He quickly oriented himself — Jackson and the railroad that struck almost due west to Vicksburg — the stations that he had passed in the cars — Clinton, Bolton close by Champion's Hill, Edwards, Bovina across the Big Black where Pemberton was supposed to be, then Mt. Albans and beyond it the heights about Vicksburg and the northern rampart of the Walnut Hills. He glanced at Sherman and began. "Gregg's brigade's at Raymond, right here about twelve miles southwest of Jackson and roughly eight below the railroad. Here's Gist's up here —" He added names, cast up rough totals of strength. "They'll all be under Johnston when he gets here tomorrow or the day after. Here's the bulk of Pemberton's force, centered around Bovina — or were yesterday."

"Any rumors of what Pemberton's going to do?"

"This isn't rumor. He's telegraphed Johnston — I know this because I knew the operator who sent it — that he's planning to move down to Dillon's."

Sherman's tufted head bent quickly over the map and Whip was reminded of a small boy staring at a birds'-egg collection. "Dillon's? Where's that?"

Whip pointed. "Right here, sir. See Edwards? Dillon's is about five miles due south of the station."

Sherman rubbed the bridge of his nose with his finger. "Hmph! If Pemberton pulls every man he's got into one force, he'll outnumber us."

"But he won't," said Whip firmly. "He can't make up his mind what to do. You can hardly blame him with about a dozen people all telling him to do different things." He raised a warning hand. "Oh, I'm not guessing about any of this. Jackson's like a grammar school with the teacher out of the room and Vicksburg, the one time I saw it, is worse. You can hear anything, see anything, read any order — and often before it's actually sent, if you know the right place to go. And that place was never hard to find. Everyone talks and no one seems to realize what's important and what isn't." He pushed his chair back from the table. "I tell you, sir, if we could get one man in Jackson and another in Vicksburg on telegraph wires that ran out into the country between the two armies, they could tell you from hour to hour what was happening. And it could be done. It's been done in Alabama." He thought of the fat Mr. Malley at Plantation Knob. "Get me two operators, sir, men who know how to string lines as well as send, and I'll guarantee to put them into both towns."

"You would?" asked Sherman briskly. "Might be something to think about. Now —"

Outside a rather sleepy voice asked, "Is the general at home? Don't bother. I'll go right in." Boots clumped onto the porch and into the cabin. The door swung open and Whip looked around.

The man who stood in the doorway was short and stocky. He wore a close brown beard in the midst of which the merest stump of cigar smoldered perilously. A wide-brimmed hat was pushed back on his head and he wore a rather shabby blue frock coat to which

twin-starred shoulder straps were clumsily fastened. Through the cigar he said, "Hullo, Sherman. Got clear a bit early so I dropped by. Not busy, are you?"

Sherman rose quickly. "You'll be, when you hear what this man's got to tell you. His name's Sheldon, of Kinnyard's outfit, and he's been living with the Rebs nearly a year. This is General Grant, Sheldon."

Grant's lips parted slightly around the cigar butt and he nodded casually to Whip. "Like to hear what you've got to say. Sit down, both of you." He turned sleepy eyes on Whip. "Been with the Rebs? Mighty interesting." He tilted back in his chair, crossed his legs, and looked placidly expectant.

Whip was puzzled as he studied Sherman's superior. There seemed to be a thick layer of rusticity about him. It would be easy to visualize him in a country store, an open cracker barrel at his elbow and a checkerboard in front of him. Then the eyes met Whip's and he saw that they were by no means sleepy but rather deeply meditative. The mind behind those eyes was working endlessly and quietly, working over and over what was essential, rolling slowly forward toward the end in view. The contrast between the two generals was remarkable and yet there was an underlying harmony. Grant's calm sureness complemented Sherman's driving dynamism.

Sherman jerked his head at Whip. "Better start with what you told me about Pemberton and Dillon's Plantation."

Whip turned the map toward Grant and explained the dispositions while the latter nodded agreeably as though commenting, "Nice piece of real estate." Then, chewing at the now extinct butt, he observed, "Why do you suppose he's coming down there?"

"The telegram said it's to force you into a fight," said Whip.

Sherman snapped, "By heaven, he'll get one."

"Ye-e-es," said Grant, frowning at his cigar butt. "I suppose he will. Sherman, I'll send you and McClernand toward Raymond. Guess McPherson better keep on to Clinton and rip up some tracks. Then we'll take Jackson." He bit on his cigar. "By the way, Mr. Sheldon, what's your status?"

"As I told General Sherman, I've been south on detached service. I'm carried on the rolls of Kinnyard's battery."

Grant tilted back again. "How'd you draw a detail like that?"

Whip sketched out his part in the Andrews raid and his later talk with Ormsby Mitchel.

"I see," said Grant. He clasped his hands across his chest and hooked his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. "Run into anything else down there that might interest Sherman and me?"

Whip plunged into an account of what he had seen and found out, making quick sketches and diagrams. Grant sat quietly, rarely speaking and sinking farther and farther back in his chair. Sherman was bolt upright, his head turning from Whip to Grant and back to Whip, his sharp voice cutting in with comment and question as the sun touched on the rebellious red tuft that jutted so oddly. As he talked, Whip was more and more struck by the two men. They were like a millstone and a circular saw, one as effective as the other. When Whip spoke of the ram that was building at Selma in deep secrecy, Sherman slapped his hand on the table. "Armored ram? We'll have to do something about that."

Grant nodded. "Being taken care of. Porter knows about it. Told me aboard his flagship at Grand Gulf. Came through you, I guess." He made no other comment but there was a glint of deep approval and respect in his eyes.

Whip felt a warm glow creep over him, partly at the unspoken praise but mostly at the knowledge that Penn had managed to get the details through to Farragut. With renewed energy he dealt with the defenses of Mobile and then turned to other matters such as state rivalries, the talk of a Polish army being brought over to join the South, centers of Union sentiment, good officials and corrupt or inefficient ones, leaks in the blockade, sources of arms and munitions, new factories and foundries that had sprung up.

"How about the people?" asked Sherman suddenly. "They getting tired of the war yet? I tell you, a lot of them in this part of the world are. Some of the big planters, red-hot secession men, have found out that they were Union all along. And at Memphis some of my officers married girls who'd been singing 'Dixie' three months ago."

Whip ran his hand through his hair. "Hard to say what they'd do in the places where I've been if the war really came down there. Just now, it's my opinion that they're mighty pleased and

cocky about what's been happening up in Virginia. They don't seem to see the importance of what you've been doing."

"Suits me," said Grant as he pulled out his watch. "Got to go on and see McPherson. You'll get orders about Raymond. Glad to have met you, Sheldon. I'll want to talk to you again. Don't know just what we'll do after we take Vicksburg but it might be that we'll take a run down Mobile way. See you later, Sherman." He nodded pleasantly and clumped toward the door. At the sill he turned and said, "Your father alive, Sheldon?"

Surprised, Whip said, "Yes, sir."

"Ought to be proud of you. Let me know if I can ever do anything for you." His rather stooped shoulders vanished down the corridor.

Whip stared after him. "He didn't need to say that. Damned decent of him," he thought.

Sherman's voice cut in. "You better write out what you told us about this part of the world before you go."

"Right, sir," said Whip. "There's one other thing, though. I didn't mention to General Grant that stuff about the telegraphers."

Sherman looked keenly at him. "You'd go back again?"

Whip felt chills creeping across his chest. He managed to say, "If it did any real good, well—I'd have to."

"Yes. I guess you'd go," said Sherman. "But I've been thinking over your Mobile stuff. I don't say anything about the risk. No matter how high I went, I'd still underestimate it. What you found out and sent back was tremendously valuable, as you know well enough. But most of that's for Washington rather than for a corps commander in the field. I've no doubt that you not only could but would bury yourself in the Reb army again. A lot of things you'd bring me would be very valuable. But, speaking in cold blood, you wouldn't be a good insurance risk. I couldn't count, as I'd want to count, on being in touch with you right along. I might be waiting for word from you only to find that your outfit had been transferred way out of reach. Other things that we needn't go into could happen. The Rebs aren't fools and sooner or later—" He shrugged. "As it is, my cavalry bring me about everything that I need. Now I'll call Pitzman and get you started writing. You want to go back to Kinnyard?"

"If that's where I'll do the most good."

"An intelligent man'll do good wherever he is. Kinnyard wants you, all right, but you won't be first sergeant. You probably haven't heard but every man who went with Andrews is commissioned by the state. Keep in touch with me. Better come and see me — let's see — we'll beat Gregg and Gist at Raymond — then we take Jackson. Yes, come and see me at Jackson, if Kinnyard can spare you. Good-by and thank you."

Before Whip reached the door, Sherman was hunched over his maps, his head in his hands and spiky, coppery hair sticking out between his fingers.

It was close to sundown when Whip, well-fed, turned a thick bundle of sheets over to Captain Pitzman, mounted his strawberry roan, and started out in search of Kinnyard's battery. Dusk had fallen when he topped a rise and saw a wooded plain stretching before him. There were fires starring the purple haze at the left of the rutted way, fires stretching endlessly. He set his horse to a gallop, pressing on toward the ruddy flickers that were capped with curling smoke. A second camp, a third. Then, in a level clearing, his eyes made out lines of vehicles parked to a hairsbreadth evenness, shelter tents drawn up as though for review.

He pulled up short, dropped from the saddle and ran into the field, bridle over his arm. He shouted hoarsely, "Kinnyard's! Hoy! Kinnyard's!" A shadowy figure materialized to his left, revolver at ready. A voice barked, "Halt! Who's —" Then the voice soared up, "Hey! It's Whip. It's Whip, boys." Discipline reasserted itself. "Corporal of the guard! Post No. 3!"

Whip leaned panting against his horse while the darkness before him swayed and echoed and men came running from their shelter tents, yelling. He swept his sleeve across his forehead and waited, trembling a little. Here was his home, for the duration. It was welcoming him. Then he stumbled forward as he recognized Tom's voice in the growing din.

A heavy rain had begun to fall in the evening of May 13th. By midnight it had increased to a deluge that turned Kinnyard's camp into an inch-deep lake. Under a paulin spread between the first and second pieces, Whip squatted with Tom and Kinnyard, drawing on a sodden cigar. The three had just completed a round of the lines.

Tom laughed wryly. "My God, can't you tell us *anything*? Damned if I'm not beginning to think you holed up in Bermuda until you got good and ready to come back to us."

Whip raised his voice above the noise of rain on the canvas. "I'd have to mention too many people and too many places. I'm so scared of giving the smallest things away. I only *know*, so far, of two people losing their lives trying to help me. I don't want to add to the list."

Kinnyard nodded gravely. "You're wise, Whip. You've lived in that world and we haven't. Now for *this* world—I want you to take over the second platoon and let Nick Staples look after the caisson sections and the rest. He's better with horses than with guns. Escholtz'll look after the limbers of the firing battery when we're in action. I made him first sergeant when Nick went up to lieutenant, you know. When you rejoined us yesterday I was figuring—" He thrust his head out of the shelter of the paulin. "Hello! What's this?"

Whip heard a horse galloping on the sodden road, heard a challenge, then a shout of "Corporal of the guard. Post No. 3!"

Kinnyard fastened the collar of his rubber poncho. "You boys stay where you are. This means me!" He ducked out into the down-pour.

"What's he do that for?" said Whip. "It's probably some turtle-eyed colonel on staff who wants a report on the percentage of left-handed men in the battery."

Tom chuckled. "Not in *this* army, Whip. Neither Grant nor Uncle Billy Sherman waste horseflesh unless it's for something that means 'Hit the road and hit it quick!' You'll see. We don't have red shirts any more and officers don't wear chicken guts on their sleeves, but we move sudden and we move fast under those two." He straightened up and prepared to slide out into the night. "I'm going to take a chance. You'd better get your young men stirring, too." Tom vanished and Whip heard him calling, "First platoon! Fall in!" Almost immediately Kinnyard's strong voice shouted, "Battery! Harness and hitch!" A bugle's blast ripped through the rain.

Whip ran toward the tents of the second platoon where men were crawling out, cursing. He bumped into a squat form in the dark, recognized it as George Beal, chief of the third section. Behind Beal,

he made out the silent, angular Roy Abbot, chief of the fourth. Beal said hoarsely, "We'll get on with this, Whip, till you get your bearings. We done it often enough." He swung his arms and bellowed, "Third section! Fall in!"

Whip could only stand idle with the rain hissing off his borrowed poncho while the men of the two sections shuttled about him. Horses were backed away from the picket line, harness rattled and clanked. Paulins were stowed. The shelter tents were struck, rolled, and packed on the limbers and caissons. An unknown private led up the roan, saddled and bridled. Then men began to loom high in the rain and Whip knew that, without waiting for command, the drivers had mounted. The dark blurs behind the sections were the cannoneers, ready to march. Voices snapped up and down the line. "First section in order, sir!" . . . "Third section in order, sir!" Whip shook himself. He had thought the battery a good one in the days of his first sergeantcy. Now, there was no comparing that old, eager, green outfit with these seasoned, veteran gunners. He wondered how he would ever be able to catch up with them.

Suddenly a furious voice began shouting, "God damn it, who's got my thumb?"

Someone answered, "Aw, shut up and fix those buckles on the muzzle cover!"

The first voice roared louder. "I want my thumb! God damn it, I know who's got it! If I don't get my thumb back I'm going to start swinging a lot of knuckles! Gimme my thumb!"

Whip heard Abbot call with a sort of weary patience, "For God's sake, give him his thumb, whoever's got it. We can't wait all night." The tumult died away in sulky grumbling. Abbot eased his mount over to Whip and reported his section in order.

"What the hell was that about?" asked Whip.

"Oh, my God," groaned Abbot. "That was just Gloomy Guy Ward. He got his thumb blown off at Murfreesboro and had it packed in salt and totes it everywhere in his haversack. It'd have taken Grant and Sherman together to budge him if he hadn't found it just now. That fourth section is the craziest lot of loons in the army and Guy's the looniest. Wait till you see 'em. They're much worse than when you knew them."

Whip nodded. Actually, he told himself, he knew very little about

the personnel of the battery. In the old days the men were objects to be used, to shed luster upon himself by good performance. From now on —

He mounted as Kinnyard shouted through the rain, "Right by section, pieces front! March!" Traces zipped, wheels churned, and the battery filed out onto the road.

All through the dripping night the march went on. Waterlogged dawn found the sections waiting in a marshy field while firing crackled in the distant front. The hours slid by, but no call came for Kinnyard and his guns. By midafternoon, under breaking clouds, word came that McPherson and Sherman had blasted back Joe Johnston's flanks, that the state capital, Jackson, flew the Union colors once more.

Rain came on again with sunset. Whip, fretting at each delay, rode by his platoon, waited with the rest of the battery on roads that were choked with hurrying infantry. Cold rations were eaten in a pine grove that was abandoned for another identical patch of ground a hundred yards farther along.

While the drivers worried over possible scratches and collar sores, Whip fumed to Tom, "Don't we ever get any action? Damn it, I might just as well have stayed at Biloxi for all the good I'm doing."

"You just don't understand," said Tom. "We're too valuable to be used. Uncle Billy's saving us to parade in Washington. He wants you to be on hand when we get there to explain to gaping Congressmen the difference between a trunion and a lanyard."

Kinnyard emerged from the darkness. "Better make sure *you* know the difference yourself, young man. We're getting action all right. Word's just come down. We'll hit Pemberton along the railroad. He seems to be heading for some heights called Champion's Hill."

"Uncle Billy's sent for us?" asked Whip.

"No. We're a bit off course. Frank Blair's division's just come up and we'll join him. He'll form McClernand's extreme left. We won't actually go back to the XVth Corps till after the action."

"Apt to be an important brawl?" asked Tom.

Kinnyard nodded gravely. "Very much so. If we can wreck Pemberton, we ought to be able to walk into Vicksburg. If we don't, we'll have Joe Johnston rallying and hitting us in the rear. We'll

start off in another ten minutes, so run along and make sure your genial hoodlums are in order."

By early afternoon of the next day, May 16th, the four guns were neatly sited and commanding a stretch of open, broken country that ended in a continuation of the tangle through which they had marched earlier in the day. A hundred yards beyond the fourth piece, a platoon of Thielemann's cavalry shuttled slowly about, covering as much of the unprotected left as they could. To the right, a company of von Blessingh's 37th lay on their arms, watching the wooded tangles beyond the open space.

Whip climbed onto the fourth piece, whose crew was surprisingly, if suspiciously, quiet, and got out his glasses in the hope of picking up a landmark that would orient him. Suddenly he lowered his glasses and beckoned to Kinnyard, who sprang lightly up beside him. "What do you see, Whip?" he asked as he got out his binoculars.

Whip raised his lens again. "See that pine that got hit by lightning? Got it? Two fingers left. What do you see there?"

"H'm," said Kinnyard. "A bare hilltop. The roof of a house. Are my eyepieces fogged? No. Darned if that isn't smoke. What's making it?" His breath caught sharply. His lenses framed a distant battery, muzzles pointing east, and gray-clad gunners moving about them. "My God. What a target!"

"Out of range. Besides, we're defiladed. Hey! They're limbering up. Here comes infantry, heading *west*! Reb infantry. Going right on past the guns."

"Must be a whole brigade on the move," said Kinnyard.

"Not on the move!" cried Whip. "*Being* moved. I tell you, McPherson's got through! He's driving 'em off Champion's Hill." He let his glasses swing by their strap about his neck. "God damn McClermand! We're out of it again." He shook his fist. "Don't you see? If he'd just pushed on slowly, we'd have pinched the whole damn Reb force between us and our right."

Kinnyard shook his head as he dropped to the ground. "This is tough terrain. For all he knew he might have jammed head on into something like Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. Then he'd have been cursed for a stupid butcher."

"He could have tried, at least," growled Whip, jumping heavily from the piece. "Hell's delight. Aren't we *ever* going to fire a shot?"

"Not till we get word to," said Kinnyard. "Not till — not till — well, for quite a while." He dropped his hand casually on Whip's shoulder and lowered his voice. "Without drawing too much attention, just take a look off to the left front — say a thirty-degree angle left from the muzzle of the fourth piece."

Whip stiffened, measured the angle in his mind. There seemed nothing off there except more woods. Suddenly he saw that the woods were alive with gray men pushing south. Here and there guidons or regimental colors made bright spots among the trees eight hundred or a thousand yards away. Kinnyard said quietly, "Count the flags. Look! Going past that gap. A brigade staff."

Whip muttered, "Yes. There's another. That means a whole division moving. Who the hell are they?" He brought up his glasses. "Hey! I've got 'em! See those guidons with the funny design through the trees? That's Tilghman's 1st Confederate Battalion. Loring's division. I saw them at Bolton a couple of weeks ago." He turned to Kinnyard. "What do we do? Give the boys 'limbers rear'?"

Kinnyard shook his head. "We haven't been spotted yet and we're pretty well below the sky line. If we keep quiet, they may just slip along."

"And if they do spot us, then limber up?"

Kinnyard pulled at his mustache. Then he said, "No, we're the extreme left of the line. If they struck back over this way, they'd come smack in the rear of the whole army. They'd be able to raise plenty of hell. We'll —" He dropped his hand abruptly. Three gray horsemen had ridden out from the trees, obviously at ease, with their rifles across the pommels of their saddles. They looked about casually, seemed satisfied with what they saw, and started back into the woods. Then one of them whooped with piercing shrillness and pointed to the high ground where the battery lay.

Kinnyard smiled pleasantly. "We're going to have callers, Whip. We must do everything we can for them."

Whip stared. "You're going to take on a whole division with just four guns?"

"Why, yes. It seems the sensible thing to do." Kinnyard fingered

the frogs of his jacket. "They're probably cut off from the rest of Pemberton's crowd and unsupported. What we've got to do is make them think we're in pretty heavy strength so they won't dare attack in force—hold them off until we get some help. If they see how weak we are, they'll come booming through onto McClernand. Here's what I want you to do. See that clear stretch by the sycamores a hundred yards or so to the left? Take your platoon, post it there, and if they do attack, fire until your guns melt. Make 'em think it's a whole brigade with a cavalry corps back of you. Tom and I'll hold on here and do the same. I'll send word back to von Blessingh. Now get going."

Whip, frozen for a second, shook himself. "It's the only thing to do." He called to his men, who had noticed the activity below and had crawled on their bellies to the sky line where they lay quietly watching the woods. "Second platoon! Posts!" The cannoneers took their stations by the pieces. Whip looked down the slope where the limbers waited, caught Nick Staples's eye, pointed to his pieces and then held out his arms wide. Almost at once the limber teams of the two pieces started forward.

He took his mount from a swing driver, called "Follow me!" and trotted off toward the space under the sycamores. When he was abreast of them and below the crest he signaled, "Action right!" and the guns were unlimbered smartly. He called to Beal, "Drop 'em right there. Twenty-yard interval. Load with canister!"

He ran crouching up the slope, threw himself flat just below the crest and wriggled forward, glasses ready.

He did not need his glasses. The edge of the woods was alive. A body of mounted infantry, about one hundred he reckoned, were deploying in the open, the men sliding to the ground, tossing their reins to the horse holders. Among the thick trees themselves, he could see color but no movement, as though the whole column had halted. Here and there, groups of officers appeared, watching the high ground through their glasses, seemingly absorbed in the stretch where Kinnyard's first platoon lay.

Whip reckoned the attacking strength. The range would be almost point-blank and, with canister, he was sure that Kinnyard and Tom could easily cope with this first reconnaissance. The dismounted men formed a line with swift efficiency. He looked to his

right. Kinnyard seemed to have run the guns farther up, in plain sight of the attack. The line came on faster, yelling. Fifty yards from the guns, they halted, fired a volley, charged on. Whip held his breath. What was Kinn doing? Twenty-five yards. Fifteen. Then he saw the guns leap back in crashing recoil, saw Tom helping run the first piece back into position, heard a second explosion. The smoke cleared. The enemy were retiring in good order down the slope but many lay in the lush grass on the lip of the slope.

He looked back over his shoulder. His own men were straining forward expectantly. George Beal held one hand cupped behind his ear. Whip shook his head and turned to the front again. The attackers had withdrawn into the woods and heavier formations of foot soldiers were coming out in their place, the commanders below seemingly satisfied that they had fairly weak opposition which they might crush easily and retrieve what had been lost earlier in the day.

A bugle blew and the gray infantry started forward in three waves of a company each. Whip calculated their speed and then wriggled back to the guns, where he jumped to his feet. "Heads up! We've got to work and work quick. Run the pieces up to the crest until I drop my hand. I'll sight the right piece. Roy Abbot, you take the left and guide on me. I'm going ahead. Keep the muzzle of that right piece pointed square at my tail. Now! Come a-running!"

He ran up the slope, the two pieces being manhandled after him. When he reached the crest he turned, watched carefully as the wheels rolled slower and slower. He dropped his hand and the trails thudded to the ground. He shouted, "All right!" and straddled the trail of the right piece, squinting through the backsight. It was almost a shock to see those gray lines pushing steadily on toward Kinnyard's guns. He was taking them squarely in the flank. He shouted again, "No. 2! Trail left!" The muzzle swung slowly toward the right. He thrust one hand behind him, waving to the No. 2. "A little more! More! Hold it!" He held his breath. He could look straight along the ranks of the second wave. The first he left to Kinnyard.

He sprang clear of the trail, held up his hand, dropped it. The two Napoleons roared together in a deluge of whitish smoke, rolled backward down the slope. Whip leaped between them. "Load up

again. Quick. You've got to sound like fifty guns." Rammer staffs whirled, the No. 3's thumbed the vents and fresh charges were rammed home. "Now!" shouted Whip. "Angle them up the slope twenty yards right from where we fired before! On the loop!"

Once more he ran ahead, sited the first piece and sprang over the trail, his eye running along the barrel. The three waves were gone, leaving a trail of forms that writhed in the grass or lay still. Down by the edge of the woods, the survivors were forming slowly and other units were pushing close to the edge as though to reinforce them. He shot a glance across at the other pieces where men were moving briskly. He saw Tom's tall figure and waved. Tom shook his clasped hands over his head and bent to his work.

Whip carefully spun the elevating mechanism, jumped beyond the right wheel and dropped his hand. Once more the two guns thudded, recoiled down the slope.

As he rejoined them, Beal panted, "Why'n't you let us stay up there? Can fire a lot faster."

"Don't you see what we're doing?" said Whip as the gun crews loaded. "This time, I'm shoving up to the left, twenty yards from where we fired the first time. Maybe the Rebs'll think we've got six guns here, not two. Anyway, the cannoneers can load in safety below the sky line like this. How long do you think the Rebs'll take to start chucking lead at us?" He raised his voice. "Steady, all hands. This time we slant to the left. Odd numbers take off your caps. Even numbers shed your coats. After the recoil, put 'em on again. Do everything you can to look different each time the Rebs see you. On your toes! Let's go!"

Three times more the guns were run up, fired from a different position. The third time, the blast came full in the faces of a thick mass of yelling men who headed straight for the muzzles, were blown away. In the shelter of the crest, Whip wiped his forehead, panting as the rammers whirled. He began to wonder how long this could be kept up. It seemed to him that each time more and more men were thrown into the attack, the commanding officer, whoever he might be, obviously tempted by the chance to break in the Union flank and rear, and as obviously unsure of just what strength was against him. Putting himself in that unknown's place, Whip reckoned that the gamble was good.

The pieces rocked ahead once more. As they reached the crest, small-arms fire sounded closer. The air hummed viciously. Fat little Mallory spun and went down across the trail of the third piece, Craigin by the off wheel of the fourth. The rifle flashes seemed to come from the left flank, seemed to be working farther up. Whip had the trails swung to cover the area where the flashes were thickest, blasted it with canister.

Then, sheltered again, he waved Beal and Abbot to him. "They'll be working around our left flank. We've got to keep on till Kinn calls us in."

"If he calls us in," said Abbot, fingering a bullet hole in his kepi. "What we want is a gun that'll shoot front and rear at the same time. We want it bad and quick."

Whip said suddenly, "How many men can you run your guns with?"

"Maybe three," said Beal. "Not easy, though."

"All right. We've lost Craigin and Mallory. That means you can spare four men. Pick 'em out and send 'em to me." He ran back to the waiting limbers and caissons. Hummel, of the third, the senior caisson corporal, rode out to meet him. Whip said quickly, "All right, John. Move fast. Have all your teams unhitch. Loop up the traces. I'm sending you four cannoneers. Mount them on the off horses as far as they'll go. Double up the rest of your drivers so each off horse has a load. Got that?" Hummel nodded. "Then start your teams off. Bring 'em around from the right, keeping close enough to the crest so the riders show from below, so the Rebs'll see 'em. Let 'em get a good look. Then curve 'em off just beyond those trees, circle back and do it all over again. I want a regular endless chain of riders passing that spot that the Rebs can see. Your pairs of riders'll look like a whole God-damn cavalry brigade slipping around to their right."

By the time the pieces were run back to the crest, the quick procession had started, the riders jingling past in pairs at a trot, exposed to hostile eyes from the waist up. Whip jumped in the air, flung his kepi wide. "Give 'em a cheer, boys. Yeeeah! The Yellowlegs! Hit 'em hard." The gunners joined in the yelling, roaring, and whooping as though all Grant's cavalry were slipping past them. The pairs circled and circled. Hummel galloped now on one side of the tiny

column, now on the other, first bareheaded, next wearing a kepi, then a slouch hat that he had picked up somewhere. Once he pulled up between the guns and stared down the slope through imaginary field glasses, then signaled madly as though to fresh formations.

Whip moved forward beyond the muzzles of the guns, on down the slope, trying to pierce the fading light. There were no living beings in the rough fields below. From the distant wood he was sure he could hear the steady tramp-tramp of men on the move. The enemy commander had apparently come to the conclusion that the heights were held in too much strength for him to persist, perhaps in view of the cavalry threat to his own flanks.

Whip got up stiffly and walked back toward the guns. "Well, boys, you held a pair of deuces and bluffed a straight flush out of the pot." He felt bone-tired but coldly satisfied with what the platoon had done. Then he noticed that the cannoneers were kneeling about two blue forms and all satisfaction fled. He broke into a run. "Get bandages out of the limber chest! Don't move either of 'em unless you have to! Bandages!"

Bill Livermore, stoop-shouldered gunner corporal of the fourth, got up slowly. "They don't need bandages," he said.

Whip dropped to his knees. Mallory's face was waxen and a dark blood clot showed just above his frayed collar. Craigin had one shattered hand flung wide, pinkish chips of bone showing through the flesh. The front of his jacket was purple and sodden and there was a sullen hole above the temple. Both were dead, probably had been killed instantly. Whip muttered, "It was when they hit us from the left. I ought to have warned 'em all to take cover."

George Beal touched his shoulder. "You did all you could, Whip. We'd have lost more if you hadn't let us load under the crest, in shelter."

Whip pushed himself to his feet and looked at the sections. The men were nodding quietly at him as though telling him that he had directed a hard job well. He straightened his shoulders. "Sling a paulin between each limber and caisson. That'll do for a stretcher. Then we'll take 'em back to the battery where they belong. Kinnyard'll arrange a proper funeral. Hitch up, Hummel, then limber rear."

When the sections reached Kinnyard's position, the captain stared

at the canvas slung hammock-like between limber and caisson. Whip said, "Mallory and Craigin. The only casualties."

"Tough," said Kinnyard. "I was going to make Mallory a corporal."

"Going to bury them here?" asked Whip. "It'd be a good place, right where the battery was in action."

"No time," said Kinnyard. "The whole division's been ordered north to join Sherman. Besides, that'll give us a chance to find a chaplain. They were both church members and that's the least I can do for them. You ready to move? We may have to keep going all night."

"Start right now, if you want."

"Fine. Your platoon did damn good work just now. Write me out a report on it as soon as you can and I'll forward it to Blair and Sherman." The sections swung off, heading for Bridgeport beyond the railroad between Jackson and Vicksburg.

Tom dropped back down the column and joined Whip. "Nice work. I tell you, Kinn's pleased as a pup with two tails. You sounded like three batteries from where we were."

"Lost two men," muttered Whip.

"You mean you lost *only* two. Shoved out where you were, you could have lost ten. Forget it. I saw my own sections get shot to hell at Perryville and they tell me it was worse at Murfreesboro." He shook his head. "Lordy, this is different. We're accomplishing something."

Whip pushed the thought of his casualties from his mind. "We really did something today, then?"

"Staff says McPherson finally broke through on the right. Pemberton wouldn't have any army at all if McClernand had moved."

"What do they figure'll happen now?"

"Figure? They can only guess for a bit. That was Loring's division that cut across us. He'll swing south, they think, and then circle to join Johnston around Canton. If the rest of Pemberton's crowd does the same thing — well, we'll have the whole job to do over. Doesn't bother me any. Uncle Billy and Ulysses can handle it."

"Suppose Pemberton's men don't join Johnston?" asked Whip.

Tom laughed. "Then we start applying for furloughs, because the only other thing he can do is shut himself up in Vicksburg. That's

exactly what Ulysses wants, so there isn't a chance he'll do it." He waved and trotted up the column.

Embedded in the infantry of Frank Blair's division, the battery rattled on through the night. When sunrise came, the wheels jolted across the tracks at Edwards' Station, pushed on well to the east of Bridgeport. When Whip, swaying in the saddle from lack of sleep, rode into the next crossroads town he found the streets and the fields filled with the weary but happy men of Tuttle's division of the XVth. They had made a record march of nearly thirty miles and, now that it was over, surveyed those who had not participated in it with rather pleased disdain.

Grant's men drove on west, as Pemberton fell back toward the defenses of Vicksburg, throwing away his last chance of joining forces with Johnston. Kinnyard's battery, now back in Sherman's XVth Corps, rolled on in the van. On the eighteenth, there was a dull rumble of fire off to the south where McPherson and McClermand were surging over the crossings of the Big Black River. Ahead, a small Confederate force fell back from the upper banks. By torchlight, the whole corps wound over the pontoon bridges that Blair's men swung over the current.

By daybreak of the nineteenth, the command reunited on the west shore of the river and the march began again. Kinnyard's men, sleepless and scantily fed, were far out in advance, acting as support for the 13th Regulars.

Whip saw the sun of the nineteenth of May rise over empty country that ran west from the river. Nothing was ahead of the rolling blue column save a screen of the 13th Regulars and clusters of cavalry to the flanks. The sky was cloudless and there was no other sound than the voice of the marching corps which was cut through from time to time by the song of bright-winged birds that shot out of woods and thickets along the road. Aides, bursting with mysterious secrets, galloped from unit to unit.

By a crossroads, Whip saw Kinnyard beckoning to him and trotted up the column. The captain smiled wryly at him. "You'll be wishing you'd stayed south, Whip. Here's another job for you. You know where Haynes' Bluff is?"

"On paper," said Whip.

"That's enough. There's a very strong Reb battery up there. It

covers the river—not inland. Uncle Billy's sending you with Swann's 4th Iowa cavalry to hit it from the rear. The chances are that the garrison hasn't had time to hear what's been happening and Swann may very well catch them napping—especially as the battery can't bring its guns to bear on him. If Swann hits trouble you pick out a position and we'll get up on the double. That clear?"

"Perfectly," said Whip, glancing at Tom, who was looking beseechingly at the captain.

"All right," said Kinnyard. "Better take someone with you who'll know the route. Ah—would you mind going along, Tom?"

Tom turned his horse's head west. "I'm there right now," he said.

"Get along, then. You'll find Swann's outfit waiting a quarter of a mile ahead."

Tom and Whip started off at a trot. "About time *I* got a chance to get a first look at the Christmas tree," said Tom. "I began to think you had some sort of a monopoly on dusting off with generals and advance guards. Where's this Haynes' Bluff, anyway?"

"About seven miles above Vicksburg. It covers the Yazoo River. We'll have to swing north on the road to Benton." He pointed to a column of waiting horsemen, their faded cavalry guidons hanging limp in the still air. "There are the Iowa boys."

Colonel Swann, tall and clean-shaven, returned Whip's salute. "You know what the job is? All right. Stay close to me and be sure your girths are tight." He raised his hand, a bugle sounded, and the 4th Iowa swung off up the Benton road at a smart trot. Whip pointed west to a long stretch of heights that loomed close. "The Walnut Hills. They look down onto Chickasaw Bayou where it joins the Mississippi. Haynes' Bluff is at the extreme north end."

"The Mississippi!" muttered Swann. "Sometimes I've wondered if I'd ever really look down at it or the Yazoo from the Vicksburg heights. And now I'm going to."

At last Whip stood in his stirrups and pointed. On the horizon just ahead to the left the slopes showed sharp and regular as though planed off artificially. He said, "The battery!" Swann threw up his arm. The column halted. The first three troops dismounted, carbines unslung, and fanned out in cautious approach. Whip held his breath, waiting for the first crack of enemy fire. The three wide-spaced lines kept on, working their way up skillfully. Then a single figure stood on the sky line, carbine held high. He shouted some-

thing that was lost in the distance, threw his hat in the air and fired a round after it. The crest was dotted with blue figures, jumping about and waving.

Neither Tom nor Whip heard any command given. The rest of the 4th Iowa pelted on at a gallop, their colonel in the van. Whip worked hard to keep up with him, saw Tom close in on the other side. The soft road boiled under their hoofs and the yelling blue men on the crest drew closer and closer.

The ground opened in front and Swann reined in quickly. As Tom and Whip halted, the colonel silently took off his hat and leaned his arms on the pommel, staring ahead.

The works were empty. The slope beyond ran smooth down to the Yazoo, where, tranquil in the sun, two gunboats lay. The Union colors fluttered from their sterns and men in blue moved on the decks. Swann muttered, "Linked up. When we started out, even Sherman said it couldn't be done!"

Whip was watching the gunboats in the stream below. He turned quickly to Swann. "Hey! Watch those gun crews down there. They're clearing for action. Get your regimental colors up here and show 'em. Those damn sailors think we're Rebs!"

Swann called sharply to the troopers, who were still filing into the abandoned works. Quick excitement swept through Whip. He stood in his stirrups, hesitated for an instant, and then spurred his horse on through a sally port to the open ground below. As he cleared the earthworks he saw, out of the corner of his eyes, the colors of the Iowa and Union float out, bold and clear over Haynes' Bluff.

His mount swept on, picking its way easily. From the nearest gunboat a dinghy pulled out for the shore, its oars flashing in the sun. Whip beat the roan's haunches with his kepi, yelling at the top of his lungs. Above the drum of hoofs, deeper shouts sailed to him over the surface of the Yazoo. He swerved to avoid a clump of trees close by the bank, reached an open space and found the cutter in close, a sunburned man standing in the bow.

He pulled the roan back on its haunches, dropped to the ground and ran forward. The sunburned man yelled, "Who in God's name are you?"

Whip shouted, "Sheldon — XVth Corps. Who are you?"

"Lynch — commanding *U.S.S. Cayuga*. Shake!" Whip felt a hard hand catch his. "But where the hell did you come from? Where's the army?"

"Sitting in front of Vicksburg right now. We're through, I tell you. We're through."

"The whole army?" The sailor's voice cracked with surprise and excitement.

A voice from the bank snapped, "What the hell kind of a scene do you call this?"

Whip, still shaking the ensign's hand, looked around and saw Colonel Swann surveying the pair, his face red with suppressed laughter. Whip stammered, "It's the navy, sir. Union — and —"

"And you're trying to desert to the navy?" Swann pointed downward.

"What? I don't —" began Whip. "Well, I'll be damned." He and the ensign were standing in a foot of water. He recovered himself, dragged Lynch ashore. "Commanding officer of the *Cayuga*, sir."

Lynch, squelching and embarrassed, saluted. Swann chuckled, "I suppose you're the local admiral, Lynch."

"Well, sir, my commission's two days older than Laidlaw's of the *Aspetuck*."

"All right," said Swann. "Then, in the name of the United States Army, I hand over to you one slightly used fort, because I've got to take my boys back to corps. Can you send a landing party to take over? They won't have anything to do except run up the colors and sit there."

"Right, sir. I'll send back to the ship."

"Then come on with me, Sheldon."

At the works, Iowa troopers lined the ramparts, yelling and waving to the gunboats from which bright flags began to flutter. Swann wiped his forehead with a silk handkerchief. "Guess that's the end of the detail for you, Sheldon. Thanks. I'll borrow you again sometime. You're a lucky mascot."



The attacks of May 19th and 22nd failed, were broken off abruptly, and the battle for Vicksburg turned into a siege, formal, slow-mov-

ing, and unrelenting. From Haynes' Bluff on the north to Warrenton on the south, Grant's lines spread thin in a fifteen-mile arc. On the river, Porter's fleet shut in the besieged garrison, denied it supplies. On the great tongue of land of the west bank, where the Mississippi formed a "U" in its sudden bend from north to south, blue uniforms appeared, doing away with any chance of Pemberton's slipping across and joining forces with the Confederates in Arkansas.

The Union forces on the east bank mined, tunneled, sapped their way forward. Their progress was measured sometimes by yards, sometimes by feet, but what they gained they rarely lost. By day, the sky was spattered with cottony puffs whose hearts flared orange, the crests erupted in dirty geysers of earth. By night rockets trailed toward the stars to burst in vivid clusters.



May slid on into June. Kinnyard's battery, dug in like fortress artillery, and its horses reveling in unwonted leisure a mile to the rear, lay on the reverse slope of a spur where Sherman's lines closed in on the northern defenses. The pieces, well below the crest, were sheltered in bombproof casemates from which, when they went into action, the cannoneers rolled them by hand up the slope. The crews and officers lived molelike in caves scooped out of the clay.

Mid-June sun, past the zenith, beat down on Kinnyard's position as Whip, returning from a private expedition to the rifle pits on the south slope, slithered over the crest.

He got to his feet and trotted down the path to the four embrasures where the muzzles of the Napoleons lowered.

Tom hailed him. "Letter for you. It's on your blankets. I had a great one from Dad—only—God, I'd give a lot to hear from Sharon. Why didn't she go home with Dad that time!"

Whip laughed. "For the same reason you didn't stay when *you* got there."

He walked off toward the heap of earth that marked his dugout, driven into the steep slope. To the west, the Mississippi showed silver and gold in the direct sun. North were more batteries, some dug in, some in the open. The roads showed yellow against the

ragged green of the fields and gave off a thin haze as work parties, cavalry, and mounted officers moved with seeming aimlessness. At the entrance to his burrow he turned and looked south. The ridge fell away a little dead ahead. The Confederate position was hidden, but on the far horizon the tower of the Vicksburg Courthouse seemed to float in a golden mist. "Wonder how long it'll be before I see that damn shack close to?" he muttered. Then he ducked into the low door with its timbered lintel.

He backed out hurriedly, staring at an envelope. Incredulously he ripped it open and read it quickly, his jaw tight and his eyes eager. Then he began again more slowly, but his eye still leapt from line to line.

MY DEAREST: —

What a happy day! I'm simply weak with relief . . . not even a hint of you since that night at Biloxi . . . and there was your name! "Mentioned in despatches!" . . . Grant wrote that you had showed "unusual courage, intelligence and resourcefulness, both in and out of formal action." I'm so proud but far, far beyond that I'm relieved . . . now that I'm here at Nashville, but I'm afraid that I can do no more work, at least not for some time. [Whip ran his hand over his forehead and muttered, "Thank God!"] . . . I'm too well known at last and I don't dare undertake anything for fear I might fail and bring disaster to others through failing. I had a really very easy time coming north from Biloxi, but it seemed wiser to General Rosecrans to have me arrested. ["You mean 'safer' and I don't believe that 'easy,'" Whip commented mentally.] . . . I'm praying that Vicksburg will fall soon — for the Union, of course — but I'm afraid I'm praying selfishly, too. When it falls, dearest, can't we be together, at least for a while? . . . Do tell Tom Madden that his friend — I don't mention the name because that friend is still working — had the fever very badly during the late spring but is quite recovered now. . . . And one more bit of news that I know will move both you and him — all the Andrews survivors have been exchanged — Will Pittenger and the rest. They've been commissioned and given a new medal called the Congressional Medal of Honor and are coming to join Rosecrans's army. If only James Andrews and Marion Ross and the others could be with them! I suppose that means that you and Tom will get the medal too. . . . The mail is just going out for Grant's army, so I must close for the moment. Do be careful, my love, and write me just as soon as you can.

YOUR PENN

Whip closed his eyes for a moment, calling up a vision of Penn's calm, lovely face in its frame of brown hair, the clear, level look of her eyes, the infectious quirk of her soft lips. "Medals for us!" he thought. "How about her? How about Sharon and that Mrs. Mabry?"

He had started to read the letter over again when he heard Kinnyard calling to him. Reluctantly he thrust the sheet into his pocket as the battery commander came up the slope, saying quietly, "Good news I hope, Whip."

"The best," said Whip.

"Glad to hear it. I've been at Uncle Billy's and he had a telegram about you. Did you ever hear of a Colonel Truesdail?"

Whip shook his head.

"I'm not even sure he's an actual colonel," said Kinnyard. "He's worked with Buell and now he's with Rosecrans, putting out agents all over the map, gathering intelligence. He's heard of you somehow and brought pressure to bear on Halleck and Stanton for your services. Halleck's willing to transfer you from Grant to Rosecrans. You don't have to go, of course."

Whip asked slowly, "What did Sherman say?"

Kinnyard smiled under his mustache. "Only that if you really enjoyed running about like a damned fizz-gig, he wouldn't stop you."

"Where's Truesdail?"

"At Nashville, Sherman said."

Nashville! He could be near Penn, would be in the very same city! The siege? How did it need him in the midst of its sapping and digging and tunneling? Truesdail could send him to parts of the South where he wasn't known, to Georgia, into the Carolinas. He would have to be in Nashville for some weeks, getting ready —

Mess call was blowing down the slope behind him and the cannoneers were falling in with a clatter of tin plates and raucous shouts. There was a thud from an unseen boat on the river. He could just see the tiny speck that was the shell arching high over the town, could see it burst in a white cloud that drifted slowly east. When the cloud had gone, the tower of the Vicksburg Courthouse still floated in the haze, unchanged.

Whip turned back to Kinnyard and shook his head. "Got kind of

a notion I'd like to see what's on the other side of that tower. I hope Truesdail can find someone else."

"You're wise, I think," said Kinnyard. "I'll let H.Q. know so they can telegraph Washington." He nodded pleasantly and walked away.

Whip drew a deep breath and felt the letter crackle in his pocket. He ran toward Tom's burrow shouting, "Tom! Oh, Tom! Got news for you! Good news!"

The siege ground on inexorably, while starvation gnawed at the defenders of Vicksburg. As Kinnyard's guns edged forward, the tower of the courthouse showed closer and closer until, on a hot July morning, white fluttered all along the battered lines.

Under a coppery sun, long columns of men in gray stumbled weaponless from the works that they had defended so valiantly. Knees sagged and feet stumbled, but chins were high and there was hard pride in reddened, sleepless eyes.

Tom and Whip stood at the battery position watching the nearest units weave toward them, abreast of them. "My God," muttered Tom. "Look at them! How did they ever manage—"

His voice was drowned in a sudden, ripping shout that volleyed all along the Union lines as Grant's men cheered and cheered in spontaneous tribute to the stumbling men who had held them off so long and so gallantly.

P A R T X

The Tide Rolls East

THE little north window grew brighter and brighter with reflected light. Sharon, on her low cot, rubbed her eyes sleepily, then blinked in surprise. Could it be morning already? She threw back her blanket, fully dressed save for a pair of low shoes into which she slid her feet, and ran to the window. The house had been started as a faculty residence for the college farther back up the hill, but the Confederates had completed it by bricking up the windows to one-foot squares and topping the structure with a flimsy flat roof. She had to put both hands on the rough sill and stand on tiptoe to look out on the rolling stretch that showed the railroad, a quarter of a mile away, the blue glitter of Second Creek and its millpond just beyond the tracks. The sun had been up for some time and no one had awakened her. Usually, long before this hour, guards had thumped on her door and left a bucket of water. After that, the key had always turned again, leaving her locked in until her breakfast — coffee of burned corn and underdone bacon and corn bread — was brought her.

She put her hands to her hair, tidying it as best she could, and turned from the window. In a way she was rather glad to be fully awake before the guards came. Things had not been so bad when General Simon Buckner's own troops held Knoxville. But since they had left, the only force about the town was an odd organization calling itself Scott's Louisiana Tigers. To her, they seemed more like some irregular band of marauders, possibly recruited from deserters on both sides.

There was no news coming from the outside now. Before Buckner had left, she had gathered that General Grant's army had been broken up following its brilliant capture of Vicksburg and its component parts dribbled away by Halleck. It was also probably true that Rosecrans had pushed down almost to Chattanooga. It was hard

to take comfort from Rosecrans's presence about Chattanooga, he could a year ago, she herself had seen Ormsby Mitchel's men march the strike straight on into Georgia through the mountain passes. General Halleck — Old Brains Halleck — had then broken up a successful army and frittered it away to nothing. Would the pattern be repeated?

Her throat tightened as she thought of her capture, nearly a month ago. If only she had taken the right fork of the Kingston road! She would have met Buckner's cavalry there just the same, but the squad that halted her would not have contained the man who had known her before the war. She knew she could have talked her way past any other squad in the whole Southern army — but not that one.

Where was Tom now? There had been Union casualties at Vicksburg and she knew that Kinnyard's battery had been sent down with General Sherman. Her lip quivered and she breathed, "As long as you're all right, Tom, I'm all right."

She began to feel hungry but even more she wanted the fresh cold water from the bucket that the guards should have brought long before. She went to the door and opened the sliding panel. So far as she could see, the corridor was empty. She called, "Guard! Oh, guard!" several times but the echoes of her voice brought no response. She began to thump steadily on the thick panels, repeating her call from time to time.

Sometime past noon her patience gave out. She caught the door handle and gave it a hard shake. To her amazement, the door swung open, throwing her off her balance. She recovered quickly and looked up and down the corridor. No thump of boots or rattle of arms caught her ear. Her eyes went wide in amazement and she stood waiting, hand to her throat. Then she began moving cautiously toward the head of the stairs.

The stairs were empty and no sound came from below. She threw back her head and went rapidly down, holding her skirts close to lessen their rustling. All at once she stood at the bottom, where silence closed in about her.

A bubbling mutter caught her ear and she peered cautiously into a little room by the right of the door. On the floor sprawled a guard, his mouth gaping wide in a red face. The air was thick with whisky

and several partially empty bottles stood on a low table. She glanced back over her shoulder. The front door was wide open. She prepared herself for a dash out, hesitated, took a darting step into the room and flicked the Colt from the guard's holster. Untroubled, he snored on.

Sharon began to tremble as she slipped out into the morning, the Colt bulging the front of her dress. She kept on down a path and turned west along the Loudon road with its towering banks. She was hardly conscious of thought, her mind mechanically forming set phrases. "If anyone stops me, I'll just say the guard was gone and I was looking for someone to report to."

The road seemed to flow by under her feet and the light breeze from the west brought fresh color to her cheeks. Her eyes grew brighter and brighter and her lips moved silently. "Tom! Tom! I'm coming to you!" Five more miles before she sighted the little house where she knew the right sort of people lived! Five more miles! From there, it wouldn't take long to reach Nashville and then —

Her breath came quicker and her side began to hurt. She shook her head to clear the humming in her ears and pressed her hand to her heart, the barrel of the revolver sinking into her soft flesh.

She whirled about, started up the bank, deep fear in her eyes. The humming had swelled and swelled, thickened to a steady drumming. Somewhere, not far beyond a sharp bend in the road, horses were coming at a sharp trot — dozens of horses, hundreds of horses. Her foot slipped and she began to slide backwards. The drumming was a roar, nearer and nearer. She struggled for a foothold, then suddenly dropped back to the road, the back of one hand pressed against her lips.

She couldn't cry out. She could only throw out both hands and run toward the blue troopers who swung into sight. She saw a lean-faced young officer raise his arm in signal to halt, saw the nearest troopers in their slouch hats swing toward her. Then they all vanished in the sudden blur that swept across her eyes. She heard hoofs pound, heard sabers clank, heard boots thump to the ground. She felt as though she were swaying in wide circles and put out her hands again to balance herself.

The swaying stopped. A thick, knotty arm was steadying her, a gruff voice was saying, "Here! Take this!" and a coarse handker-

chief was thrust into her hands. She dried her eyes as best she could but the sight of the short blue cavalry jackets, the "U. S." on the saddle blankets, set her trembling again. Suddenly she remembered what lay east down the road. She took away her handkerchief and pointed shakily. "You're lost. That's Knoxville off there." The words were very hard to manage.

The lean officer nodded. "Sure. My home. We're the 8th Tennessee. The Rebs have pulled out."

Sharon managed to focus her gaze on the group. Twelve men, counting the officer, a lieutenant. "But they'll come back!" she said, twisting her hands.

"Hope they do," said the lieutenant grimly. "All Foster's cavalry brigade is back of us and the XXIII Corps is right behind them. You Union?" He looked keenly at Sharon. "No need to ask that, I guess. What can we do for you? It'll have to be fast or the rest of the boys'll be riding up our cantles."

Sharon felt dizzy. Knoxville evacuated! A cavalry brigade and a whole corps behind it sweeping on toward the city on the Holston! She said, "Yes. I'm Union. I—I've done work for General Mitchel and General Buell and General Rosecrans. I've been captured and —"

The lieutenant turned quickly. "Give her your mount, Holt. Corporal James, see that she gets back to Colonel Foster. He'll want to talk to her." He smiled at Sharon. "You can ride all right? Then give her a hand up, Holt. There you are, young lady. Tell Colonel Foster that Lieutenant Farquhar sent you to him."

Sharon had to ride with her head down and she kept turning her face away from the road, for there were blue troopers trotting through the fields. There were blue troopers in the road, column on solid column, with the bright guidons at the head of each troop. Guidon spears and bright scabbards and crossed gold sabers pinned to felt hats winked and twinkled at her. She heard men shouting to her and she tried to hold her lips in a set smile. But she was thinking of all the people, all the Union people, hiding in the hills, hiding up in the mountains, people who would look far down and see the glinting river of blue and know that their Union had come back to them. From hilltop to hilltop they would flash the news.

She had to swing her horse about when James reined in ahead of

her, because just behind Colonel Foster floated the flag of the Union. With an effort she straightened herself and brought her mount beside Foster, who had halted the column. The big, bearded man patted her shoulder. "Take it easy. I felt the same way yesterday when an old farmer came to the edge of the road with a homemade flag. Now what's this James is telling me? You worked for Ormsby Mitchel and Rosecrans?"

"And for General George Morgan."

"On a job now?"

She shook her head. "I was stupid and they captured me. I—I can guide you into Knoxville."

Foster looked quizzically at her. "More likely they were lucky than that you were stupid." He gathered his reins. "No guiding. We know the way all right and you've done your work. Can you trot sidesaddle with that McClellan? Then you and I are going right up front. We're going to ride into town along with Farquhar's men. There'll be a lot of yelling and shouting when we come in and I want you right up there where people'll get a good look at you. Come on. It's as much for them as for you."

Sharon moved reluctantly forward with him. Before the colonel broke into a trot, she laid a hand on his bridle and asked, "Do you—did you ever hear of Kinnyard's battery? Kinnyard's Independent Ohio Battery?"

Foster frowned. "Kinnyard's? Well, I know of it. They say it's one of the best outfits in the west."

The corners of Sharon's mouth drooped. "Then you don't know where it is?"

Foster smiled warmly at her. "Got some rather special reason for wanting to know?"

"Yes," she said in a low tone. "Very special."

Foster pushed back his hat. "I'll find out for you."

Farquhar's men were quickly overtaken and Foster motioned the lean lieutenant to ride beside Sharon. Other commands, which she had not heard, must have been given, for the two color sergeants were close behind and right and left blue troopers were racing across the fields, closing in on the city in a wide, sweeping arc. The shock of relief had begun to leave Sharon, was replaced by a wild, hot exultation. She threw back her head, laughing, and her brown hair streamed in the wind.

The houses at the west of the city were very close. Suddenly Sharon was aware of people running out of their front gates, hands raised and eyes staring. They were in the streets beside the trotting horses, catching at stirrup leathers, holding out their hands to the flag. An old man, huddling into a Mexican War coat, hobbled down a gravel path shouting, "Glory, glory, glory! I've lived to see it!" Union flags appeared, fluttering from windows, lashed hurriedly to rough poles, clutched in tense hands whose fingers dug deep into the fabric.

The shouts rose above the clatter of the hoofs and the clank of metal. By a lamppost a woman held up a baby while a pinafored little girl hopped up and down, stiff-legged, beside her. A high voice cracked, "Johnny! There's little Johnny, riding behind the colors!"

Sharon called to Foster, "The Lamar House. Gay Street. Next right!" and the colonel swung the head of the column down the main thoroughfare. She had to swerve her horse quickly as a man ran across the street, a vast rolled-up flag over his shoulders. She waved frantically at him. "There he is! That's Colonel Luttrell, the mayor! And there's Oliver Temple and —"

Colonel Foster halted the column abruptly and swung to the ground. He was swallowed up at once in a rush of men and women and children. She struggled to join him, saw Colonel Luttrell alternately hugging him and shaking his hand while a little old woman clung tight to his sleeve, seemingly repeating a question over and over. Sharon was nearly knocked off her feet, found Farquhar's arm steadying her. The lieutenant smiled uncertainly down at her, as he said, "Come on, Foster'll want you with him!" but his eyes were darting about in endless questioning.

The little old woman, neat in bonnet and shawl, saw him and left Foster with a quick, gliding step. Farquhar's arms gathered her up in a great sweep and Sharon heard her cry, "Oh, Daviel! My Daviel! I've wondered and prayed—" Sharon bowed her head and moved on, but people were calling to her, men were running toward her, the older Unionists of the city and the county—the younger ones were wearing blue or hiding in the mountains.

She barely heard or realized what words came from those unsteady, working mouths that had held firm and hard since long before Sumter. The steps of the Lamar House were beneath her

feet and she found Oliver Temple, his strong, clean-shaven face alight, guiding her into the building, where Foster and Luttrell stood side by side, the colonel gently pushing the mayor forward as the proper man to receive the people of Knoxville.

Sharon whispered, "You ought to go over there with them, Judge Temple. This is as much your work as —"

"Nonsense, nonsense!" rumbled Temple. "Luttrell's had to do everything. Been fine." He laid his hand gently on Sharon's shoulder. "As for you, my dear, a lot of people don't know about you, but they're going to. Come on — let's get up to that clear space beyond Foster. I want to say something."

Sharon stirred uneasily. "Please, Judge Temple. I'm — I'm — this air and the crowd. I better slip out for a minute. Do you know where Jeanette Mabry is?"

Temple smiled down at her. "Not far. She's getting people to bring out food and water for the troops."

"But they don't need it and the people here —"

"The people here need to *give* it. It'll be a tremendous thing for them. Come along, now. Things are getting quieter and I'll have a chance —"

But Sharon slipped away from his side, worked on to the door and stood leaning half hidden by one of the pillars of the porch.

Daylight was fading, though the sun was still strong on the high lift of the Great Smokies to the east. But people were not waiting for dusk. From peak to peak great fires flared, shot up curling plumes of smoke. They flared in the eastern hills, in the highlands to the north and to the west, telling of the freeing of East Tennessee. Already the message was spreading, and worn, ragged people were coming uncertainly down side streets from the outskirts of the town as though not quite sure that they dared to be where they were, with the sun still above the horizon.

Across the street a trooper was yelling from a knot of children, "Hey, Dick, bring your horn over. Good Lord look down! The kids ain't ever heard of the tune!" A grinning towhead dug a battered key bugle from his saddlebags and went loping across the street. The first trooper raised his arms like a bandmaster. "Pick up the tune, Dick, kind of slow. You kids get the words from me! Now — 'Mine — eyes — have — seen — the glory — of the

— coming of — the Lord — ’ That’s it. ‘He is trampling — ’” Hesitantly, the quavering little voices picked up the air, swelled in volume while the trooper swung his arms in time.

The street below was crowded with bare heads and bonnets. There were spindly little girls, upturned eyes alight, pretty young girls and plain ones, proud-chinned matrons and bent, elderly women, waiting, watching the trees. Then Luttrell’s great flag uncoiled, spread its wide stripes. The slow march under the flag started. Dimmed eyes turned up to it and hands reached in vain effort to touch the lower edge. By the sidewalk, the troopers stood silent, heads bared and bridles over their arms. In front of the hotel the children sang on with gathering confidence, “I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps —” Sharon tried to join in but her throat ached and her voice shook and broke.

A light carriage, with two women in the back seat, turned in to Gay Street from the right. Sharon ran toward the vehicle, whose colored driver had halted it at the sight of the irregular procession. Sharon ran toward it crying, “Jeanette! Jeanette Mabry!”

The frail, gray-haired woman stood up quickly and waved, her clear voice carrying over the din. “Here we are. Oh, Sharon, I’ve been so worried about you. I didn’t — ”

The second woman dropped to the sidewalk, ran lightly past the horses toward Sharon. Her bonnet, held by its strings, hung clear of her light brown hair. Her gray eyes danced and her full lips were parted in surprise and delight. She ran on, arms out.

Sharon stopped dead, then ran to meet her. “Penn! Penn! Wherever did you come from?” She flung her slim arms about Penn, kissed her. “I don’t understand. I don’t have to. You’re here! And — ”

Penn hugged her. “The railroad’s mended and I came through on the first cars. Headquarters let me. And there was Mrs. Mabry at the station, having pies loaded into wagons for the boys. Oh, Sharon dear! What a day! What a wonderful, wonderful day! These people! I’ve been laughing and crying all the way from the station! And Tom and Whip are all right! Both of them! They — ”

Sharon cried, “They’re coming in with Burnside?”

Penn’s smile faded a little. “No. They’re around Memphis with Sherman. But they’re safe, they’re safe! And they both did wonder-

fully in the siege." She gave Sharon a little squeeze. "Oh, I can't look at this enough! The Union colors and Union troops all through East Tennessee again. Where were you when it happened?"

"I'm still so shaky it's hard to think back. I'd been in that jail off by the college and —"

Penn stared at her. "Jail? And we never knew?"

"I don't want to talk about it now. Let's go back to the carriage. Penn, dear, just think, it may be all ending — everything — right now."

Arm in arm they walked back through the fading light. In the street the procession of women had turned and was marching back under the flag that hung from the trees. Across from the hotel, the children were still singing, a new song this time — "The Union forever, hurrah, boys, hurrah —" Then from the south, drifting on the breeze, came a faint, distant crackling as though light forces had come in contact and were exchanging shots. The sound faded, died away, but Sharon shivered and clung tighter to Penn's arm.



Burnside began to fortify Knoxville, while preparing to move the bulk of his force south to join Rosecrans about Chattanooga. By mid-September, Rosecrans's men poured east through Johnson's Crook and Stevens' Gap, McFarland's and the Rossville Gap. They spilled on from McLemore's Cove and north above Chattanooga itself. But the great blue arc, more than fifty miles from tip to tip, was far too wide.

Bragg, re-enforced by Longstreet's veterans from the Army of Northern Virginia, struck, and in two days' fighting sent Rosecrans reeling back over the high ridges to the flats about Chattanooga. The vital railway was under Southern fire and the roads that could feed supplies to the beaten Union Army were few and miserable. Horses and mules began to die. Men's rations were cut and cut again. Up at Knoxville, his orders to join Rosecrans canceled by defeat, Burnside gripped the city tighter and tighter.

Rosecrans was relieved. Halleck united the hitherto separate Departments of the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee in the

Military Division of the Mississippi and placed at its head Grant, who took charge in late October. His Vicksburg veterans followed him more slowly, hampered by Halleck's orders to repair virtually useless railroads as they came. Hooker brought down from the Army of the Potomac the XIth and XIIth Corps.

As Grant, squinting through a wreath of cigar smoke, took in the situation, he overrode Halleck's orders and hurried forward his old command, now known as the Army of the Tennessee, free-swinging veterans who cheered their red-headed leader, Sherman, as they marched.

By mid-November the concentration was nearly complete. In face of this gathering storm and unified command, Jefferson Davis, on November 4th, suddenly sent all of Longstreet's men against Knoxville.



Four hundred miles and more, Kinnyard's battery had rolled and tugged its way with the rest of Sherman's artillery and wagon trains from Memphis on the Mississippi to Bridgeport on the Tennessee. Now, in late November, the four Napoleons with their attendant caissons and wagons moved across the swaying bridge at Kelly's Ferry and plunged into the high-walled pass that led across the great tongue of land formed where the river bent sharply north, then west and then south again. The paint of gun, limber, and caisson showed deep nicks and scars; the horses were worn and bony; officers and men pressed on in stained uniforms made up of a weird medley of government issue, civilian clothes, and hastily converted gray from the captured Vicksburg stores; some of the elements of the battery were drawn by six-horse hitches although most of the sections were reduced to four. But the horses were well-groomed, the marching cannoneers kept steadily on. Not an axle shrieked from lack of grease and the harness was supple and uncracked.

Just inside the pass Whip pulled up the slope a little and watched his platoon bend to the rough road. Satisfied with what he saw, he paced along the column. There was nothing to be seen for the first mile or so, save the slant of the hills, the road choked with men

and guns and horses and, far ahead of the first section, the bayonets of Miller's 6th Iowa, Corse's brigade, Ewing's division, as they led the battery on to Brown's Ferry and its bridge.

All at once the ridge on the right of the road fell away and Whip unconsciously checked his mount. There, not much more than a mile to his right front, the Tennessee swung in its dart to the north and, towering hard above the bend, Lookout Mountain caught the late sun. Far beyond it he saw the roofs and spires of Chattanooga and, more distant, the harsh shoulder of Missionary Ridge. On the crest of Lookout he had stood with Sharon, watching the last blaze of a dying day. In early morning they had scrambled down the slopes to the fields below. The spot where he had seen the Union barge and the gray cavalry patrol was still out of sight back of the immediate hills, but his mind followed every fold and contour of the ground.

He looked closer at the sharp prow of Lookout. The great crest was no longer empty. The barrels of heavy guns flashed; wagons, antlike in the distance, crawled up a zigzag road; earthworks showed raw and from the extreme northern pinnacle a signal flag flapped right and left as it spelled out its slow code. He frowned. "That's nice. The Rebs can look right down from there and count the number of dogs following every outfit."

He shook his reins and trotted up the column. Tom, battered kept pushed back from his curly hair, looked around. "Found out where we're going, Whip? Kinn's gone ahead to Brown's Ferry, but last I saw him he hadn't heard anything."

Whip dropped his hand on Tom's shoulder. "Don't get your hopes up too much, but Brown's takes us to the north bank. So far as I've been able to make out, Grant's got all his men on the south."

Tom looked puzzled. "Well, no law against that, is there?"

"Don't be a jug-head. We seem to be splitting off from Grant. And — this road leads on to Knoxville!"

Tom turned quickly in the saddle. "Knoxville! By God, it could be. We know that Longstreet's gone up there with his gang! Oh, if we're heading that way —"

Whip smiled grimly. "Guess we'd both like it pretty well. Just hope that Penn and Sharon got out in time, though."

Tom grunted. "You know those two. They'd no more get out than they'd turn Reb."

"Suppose so. Well, when we cross the Ferry we'll know where we're heading. If we turn right we're going to crowd in so close to Chattanooga that we'll be able to see old man Swims from across the river. If we turn left—well, there'll be some Rebs around Knoxville who'll wonder what hit 'em. Keep your eyes peeled."

He rode back to his platoon, biting his lip thoughtfully.

Guiding the sections over the swaying pontoons was an old story to Kinnyard's men and soon the ground of the north bank of the Tennessee rolled under the wheels of the battery forge. Whip stood in his stirrups looking eagerly ahead as the battery struck out toward a fork in the road. The head of the column came closer and closer, the lead pair of the first piece swung a little to the right, then cut sharply left, heading the battery north along the road that led up the state to the Hiwassee, the Holston, and the hill-girt tableland where Knoxville lay.

The leaders had turned again, bearing right along a road that led east to vanish in a wild tangle of ground. As he glumly watched his platoon take the east turn, Tom cantered back to him. "Tough luck for us, Whip. We're going into some kind of a camp that Uncle Billy's got laid out for all his crowd. It's not far ahead."

Whip sighed. "If he's planned it, it's got to be all right."

The battery halted in hilly country where the dusk was thick with the sound of troops. Staff officers flitted along the road, calling in low tones, "General Sherman's orders. No bugles tonight. No fires. No drums. Make as little noise as possible. General Sherman's orders!"

The stir in the dusk thickened and the head of a column of infantry appeared, pushing back along the road that led to Brown's Ferry. Whip leaned from the saddle, looking keenly at them. They wore kepis, unlike the usual slouch-hatted foot soldiers that he had known, and the crown of each cap was marked with a crescent. The companies were smartly turned out and moved with precision.

Whip hailed a company that marched with perfectly aligned rifles. "What outfit?"

The reply was loud enough, but so guttural that he couldn't make it out. He hailed again, was answered, still gutturally but intel-

ligibly, "Sigsty-eight, New Yorg. Major von Steinhausen, Schurz's division, Howart's corps!"

Whip nodded to Tom. "Army of the Potomac. Howart? Oh, of course. O. O. Howard. I remember reading about him in *Leslie's*. Lost an arm in front of Richmond. Then this is the XIth Corps. Chock-full of Dutchmen."

"Wonder where they're heading," speculated Tom.

"Been thinking of the same thing," said Whip. "They—I've got it. They're coming from this new camp of ours. The Rebs'll see 'em from Lookout and take them for our whole outfit, countermarching *back* across Brown's. In this light and at this distance, they can't make out details. I'll bet that's what it is. Yes, *sir*. Listen! Artillery coming on in their rear."

It was dark by the time the battery turned into a field that was dotted with scrubby trees. North and south the slopes rose steep and the men in the sections cursed furiously as they tried to find places to bed down.

Footsteps crackled in the underbrush and Whip made out Nick Staples's lank form coming up from the relatively level spot where the horses were picketed. "All serene?" asked Whip.

Staples said wearily, "Good as we can do in the dark. Just once I'd like to be in a camp that we didn't pitch after dark and leave before sunup. Haven't had a real good chance to go over the horses since we quit Memphis. Heard when we're supposed to haul our tails out of here?"

"No word yet," answered Whip.

Staples spat. "They're going to get a long night's rest or I'll raise hell. God damn, this hike's been tough on 'em."

Kinnyard spoke from the darkness close by. "Sorry, Nick. Their sleep's got to wait."

"Wait?" snapped Staples. "Look! We're down to four-horse hitches in most of the sections. If you work the teams tonight, you'll be down to two."

"I know," said Kinnyard quietly. "But it can't be helped. I want you to harness and report with the teams at the crossroads. The vehicles stay here."

"What the hell for?" stormed Staples.

"Sherman's orders. Every team in the XVth's going."

"Oh, God Almighty! I thought the redhead had *some* brains. It's bad enough for the drivers, but it'll kill off our mounts."

"Here's the story. This afternoon, Thomas moved out and captured a hill called Orchard Knob at the north end of Chattanooga Valley. The Rebs'll try to chase him off it in the morning. Thomas has got to get his guns up there and all his horses are dead. We're hauling them for him. Get the boys started right away, please, and be sure and tell them what the job's for. You can't make it sound too important."

Staples shrugged. "If it's got to be done, it's got to be done," he said, and walked away shouting, "Drivers, fall in!"

"Got any idea yet of what our real job is?" Whip asked.

"Not a hint, Whip. Whatever it is, it's so secret that Uncle Billy isn't saying much. Of course, we could hit anywhere from here."

"Maybe Knoxville?" asked Whip quickly.

"Perfectly possible. And we probably won't know till the last minute. Need any rations for yourself?"

"Tom's got some cold chicken in his saddlebags and part of it's mine. Guess I'll hunt him up and declare a dividend. Need either of us for a while?"

"No. The guards are all posted. Just don't stray too far. You'll find me under that white birch if you want me."

Whip hunted up Tom by the first platoon as the teams started wearily off toward the crossroads, looped-up harness jingling. "Break out that fowl, Tom," he said. "I'm blowing mess call."

Tom, squatting in the light drizzle, fumbled in his saddlebags. "Wish to God I could trade the damn bird for some beef. I've left a four hundred mile trail of chicken bones right back to Memphis. When I shaved this morning, I swear I found feathers on my razor. What do you want—drumstick or a slab of breast?"

"Give me the stick. I can pretend it's a ham bone." Tom handed him a greasy joint and Whip went on, "Kinn says he doesn't need us for a while. How about taking a cast to the east? I'd like to get where I can look across to Chattanooga."

"Want to see if you can spot Swims's palace? Sure, let's go."

They started off through the wet woods, keeping clear of the road down which more artillery teams clopped their way.

At last Tom held up his hand. "Steady. At least I can *hear* some-

thing. Go easy along here or we'll be walking right into the Tennessee. Listen to the current."

Whip halted. "Right. That's the river. I can smell it, too. You know, we're just about opposite Gavin McGavin's house where we met Ben Tincup. Chattanooga must be off to the right a bit, but the fog blankets it. What's off there to the left? On this bank, I mean."

Tom moved cautiously on. "It's a creek, flowing into the river. Just ahead there. It's — hey! What's that noise?"

Whip joined him, hand back of his ear. Upstream the night was filled with a muffled, hollow thumping. He edged past Tom, pulling himself along by the willows that grew thick on the creek's side. "Let's see what all this is about."

He kept on for some hundred yards, then stopped short. The woods ahead were filled with lines of waiting infantry, motionless and silent. Half-seen on the surface of the water, clumsy shapes rocked, collided, drifted apart, collided again. "Pontoon boats!" said Tom. "That was the thumping we heard. What the hell's to pay?"

He jumped as a voice near him barked, "Who the devil's that?"

"Sorry, sir, didn't see you," said Whip hastily. "Sheldon, Kinnyard's battery."

A tall form emerged from the dark, head thrust forward. "Sheldon, eh? Then I suppose that's young Madden with you. What are you up to? Another of your confounded bright plans to win the war?" Sherman's voice was edged with suspicion.

"No, sir. Just getting the feel of the country."

"Hmph! Wouldn't have been surprised if you were hatching a scheme to float your damn guns over. Kinnyard know where you are?"

"Yes, sir."

Sherman jerked his head. "All right. Your walk's over. You stay right here. We're going to try something. If it works, you hit back for your battery as fast as God'll let you. My chief of artillery, Major Ezra Taylor, is with Kinnyard now. You'll tell him to have every gun and caisson ready to move. The teams will be back from Thomas's lines by that time. Got that? Then stay where I can catch hold of you and if you try to improve on what's here, I'll drown you with my own hands — both of you." He chuckled as he turned away. "Where's Giles Smith?"

Someone answered from thick trees close by. "Here, sir."

"We're about ready. The last pontoons are reported at North Chickamauga Creek. We've got one hundred sixteen in all. Want to start now?"

"I'm in order, sir. Oscar Malmborg's brought up the 55th Illinois."

Sherman halted and his voice sounded somehow gentler as he spoke. "You've got your orders. Step lively, please. Thirty-five men to a boat. Be as quiet as you can."

Whip sat on a chunk of driftwood and tried to follow the course of the boats, but they were lost a few yards offshore. He reflected that the mist was a Godsend, for they would be upon the enemy pickets with almost no warning. Tom nudged him and held out a piece of cold chicken wrapped in cartridge paper. "Help yourself, Whip. I've got more in the pouch." He spoke in a low tone as though fearing to break into Sherman's intense concentration.

The general sniffed, jerked his head around abruptly. "Got any more of that?"

"Here's a wing, sir," said Tom.

"Can you spare it?"

"Got plenty, sir."

Sherman took the wing. "Thanks. Anytime you're hungry, draw on my personal commissary for one chicken wing." There was a ripping sound. "Here, Smith. Half for you." He looked at Tom again. "Make that a half chicken wing from me and half from General Smith." He chewed solemnly on his share, then pitched the bones into the stream. The silent watch went on.

Whip started. "Sir — off to the left. Two shots. I thought I made out flashes."

Sherman nodded. "That's where they ought to be. Good. Shots dead ahead now."

Whip heard the muffled explosions, saw pale yellow patches wink in the fog from the far bank. Fifteen minutes, half an hour, went by. Tom rose to his knees. "Something coming, sir!" He pointed to a vague blob out on the water.

Sherman cupped his hands and shouted, "Who's there?"

A thin voice sailed back, "Detail, sir — 55th Illinois, with Reb prisoners. Another boat just behind, same load."

"Have trouble?"

"No casualties, sir."

"Good. Turn the prisoners over to the provost for questioning. Then fill up with more men and start back." The boat edged into the creek mouth, vanished. Sherman said over his shoulder, "Now if you two artillery gentlemen will go back to camp and report to Major Taylor that we've started landing, I'll be much obliged. We'll have eight thousand men on the south bank by daybreak. Good night and thank you."

Tom whistled under his breath as the two took the road that led back to Kinnyard's camp. "The old sausage machine sure starts grinding when Uncle Billy turns the crank."

"Sure does," said Whip. "And by daybreak, he'll be feeding us right into it with the rest of the war meat."

"Uh-huh," said Tom. "Watch out. Here's the turn. Battery guard! Is Major Taylor with Captain Kinnyard?"

The drizzle kept on through the night, and the morning of November 24th was sodden and mist-shrouded. All through the early hours the battery, in light marching order, waited on the road that ran through the hidden camp from which Sherman had launched his surprise crossing. There were sounds of heavy firing off to the south, but the wooded, broken country to the right cut off all observation. Whip, his bridle over his arm, examined the horses of his platoon with Nick Staples. "Great job you and Oats have done, Nick," said Whip. "These beasts could hit out on another four-hundred-mile hike."

Staples, running his hand over a cannon bone, frowned. "Not with my say-so. That road last night! Road, hell! It was just a ditch filled with rocks. Well, they say it's worse up at Knoxville. Heard that Burnside can't hold out much longer. Getting starved."

"What?" said Whip sharply. "Where'd you dig that one up?"

"Heard Thomas himself tell Phil Sheridan so and he'd got it from Grant."

"How long did Burnside say he could hold on?"

A bugle sounded from the head of the column. "Tell you later," said Staples, swinging into his saddle. "Here we go!"

The battery lurched on along the rough road, the drivers leading their teams. Whip walked with them, his roan following docilely. The woods were cleared, the column turned right toward the river,

and Whip stared in astonishment. Off across the flats, where there had been empty river the night before, a broad pontoon bridge rocked gently in the current. Across it rolled a battery, guidon bright at its head, while other batteries were already massed on the south shore. As he watched, another line of guns and caissons swung onto the planks and he recognized it for James Williams's 1st Iowa, which had been camped not far beyond Kinnyard's.

The shore came closer and closer, the planks rang to the pound of hoof and wheel. He craned his neck. The drizzle still held. He could see that the southern fields were thick with infantry and artillery, all moving inland. But the broad nose of Missionary Ridge was mist-wrapped almost to ground level.

On the south shore he swung into the saddle, motioned the drivers to mount and gave the signal to trot as the other sections slanted off toward the west, heading for the right flank of a heavy mass of infantry that was forming. As he rode, he saw other bodies, full divisions he estimated, grouping center and left.

He cantered across abandoned field works, then saw, beyond the waiting infantry, fresher dirt. The infantry that had ferried itself over in pontoons during the night must have started digging at once, for they had created a well-protected bridgehead. Kinnyard signaled to him and he joined the head of the battery. "How'd you like riding across that beautiful target?" grinned Tom.

"I'd have gone under that bridge if a kid had snapped a popgun behind me." He looked at Kinnyard. "What are orders?"

Kinnyard nodded toward the troops just ahead. "Ewing's 4th Division," he said. "We're supporting it along with three Illinois batteries and one Missouri. Sherman's moving right up the nose of the ridge in echelon. Morgan Smith's division's on the far left, then John E. Smith's center, and then Ewing. We'll roll along Ewing's right flank. We can expect to hit anything at any time. Be sure your sections can go into action without the slightest delay. I'm going to halt the column by that apple tree over there. When the whole shebang starts, we go into line, first piece on the left. That'll make you the extreme right. When we go into action, Nick and Escholtz will run the limbers to cover, no matter how far they have to go. I'm not going to have my horses picked off by Reb sharpshooters. Nick knows about it."

The battery halted by the apple tree that Kinnyard had pointed out. Whip stared ahead of the waiting infantry, who, in the manner of seasoned veterans, were saving their legs by stretching out on the wet grass. Beyond them the ground rose in a steady, gentle slope that melted away in the mist. Scattered pale patches began to wink up in the clouds and bullets whined high in the air. There was a hidden, deep-toned thud and a shell screeched away to burst with a flat smack in the soggy ground close by the river. Whip saw the cannoneers of his platoon cocking their ears toward the unseen heights.

Beyond the head of Ewing's massed division, Sherman was reining in beside his brother-in-law, his head moving in animated jerks and his arm stabbing the air. Then he wheeled his mount and raced off toward the advanced left division, Morgan Smith's.

Bugles suddenly blared and drums rolled. The three divisions, in staggered formation, moved at a slow, steady gait up the slope, their heads vanishing into the mists. Whip stood in his stirrups and watched Kinnyard. When he saw his arm go up, he nodded to his chiefs of section and sent his platoon off at a sharp trot, then wheeled it left front so that it formed the right end of the battery line, some fifty yards behind the rearmost of Ewing's elements.

The horses fought their bits, threw their shoulders into their collars. Whip crooked his arm across his forehead in signal to decrease the gait. He called, "Steady! What are you trying to do? Run over Ewing's boys?" The pace slowed to a walk and he felt a quick glow of pride as he looked along the line that was dressed so smoothly and maintained such precise intervals. He hoped that the Illinois gunners, over by Ewing's center, could see them.

The lead driver of the fourth piece swerved his pair suddenly, swung the section far to the right. Whip shouted at him, then saw that he had swerved to avoid the end of a trench where a few blue and gray bodies were scattered. The first outworks! Carried in a single rush! Whip shouted and waved his arm. Kinnyard's little bugler galloped up beside him, saluted. "Sir, Cap'n says don't try to keep formation. Ground's all broke ahead and there's trenches. He says try to keep roughly in line and use your own judgment."

Whip nodded in acknowledgment and the bugler raced off. The

ground was growing steeper and the mist seemed to be thinning. There was sharp firing all along the line. Here and there he could make out groups of Ewing's men halting, dropping to the ground to fire, creeping on cautiously. Another fifty yards and he made out a great shoulder rising to his right front. It bristled with men who ducked their heads, drove forward out of sight, reappeared to throw themselves to the ground in the shelter of the summit. He looked left across the trampled ground. More blue figures and gray scattered about. The first platoon was moving on steadily, the drivers seeming to try to weave their way on without touching the bodies. A man with a bloody face raised himself to his knees, hands high and pleading. The lead team of the second piece swung to avoid him. Hands still high, he tottered to his feet, staggered and pitched head-long under the gun wheels. Whip heard the cannoneers cry out in horror. The piece jolted sickeningly, rolled on.

The firing was heavier than ever as he drew closer to the ridge. Past a burning hut a dismounted officer ran madly, saw the sections and threw up both hands. "Who's in command? Who's in command?"

"I am," said Whip, trotting over to him.

The officer, a major, took off his hat and a quick spurt of blood ran down his cheek. He pointed to the right with a trembling hand. "Give us some fire there. Right away. You can take a whole line of Rebs in enfilade. Get 'em up there! Quick!"

Whip looked at the steep slope, rough and rock-strewn. He nodded to the major. "Right away, sir." He held up one hand, shouting, "Action right! Pieces, by hand to the front!"

The major waved his arms and his voice broke to a screech. "No, no! God damn it, no! It'll take too long. You drivers — hit straight ahead."

"Hold it," shouted Whip. "We can't take that slope, not with horses. We'll use ropes and cannoneers on the wheels."

"You'll use your horses. God damn it, a whole battalion's getting wiped out there. You'll take orders from me or get a court-martial." He ran over to the lead pairs. "Get going now! Straight ahead. Unhook your guns at the crest. I'll show you where. Come on."

The drivers and the chiefs of section looked inquiringly at Whip,

who threw out his hands, helpless. The drivers shrugged, leaned forward in their saddles and started their teams up the slope, their boots drumming against their horses' ribs.

Whip circled his mount behind the caissons, watching with a growing sense of sick defeat. The major was walking backwards up the slope, urging the drivers on. The third piece, taking advantage of a fairly smooth stretch, got into the lead by a carriage length. Then the slope pitched steeper. He could hear the pound of hoofs, the snorting of the horses, and the tense voices of the drivers urging them on. The drivers leaned farther and farther forward, eyes straining. Little by little the horses slowed down, wove from side to side. The great muscles of their haunches cracked with the effort and their heads swayed in slow arcs. Ahead of them the major yelled and waved.

Whip rode up beside the third piece. Even the great black wheelers, the best pullers in the battery, were advancing a step at a time, their powerful legs trembling and their collars cutting into their shoulders. Suddenly they stopped, checked at last by the frightful slope. Whip cut across to the major. "Sir, I tell you, no team in the army can make this. They —"

He whirled his horse about as the wheel driver yelled.

The hoofs of the two wheelers began to slip. Slowly the spokes of the limber and piece turned backward. The wheelers reared, lashed out with their forefeet. The swing and lead pair gave ground. The wheels turned faster and faster. Whip flung himself to the ground yelling, "Unlimber! For God's sake unlimber." He saw the chief of section, George Beal, dismount and jump for the pintle catch. Then, in a horrible cascade of men, metal, and horseflesh, the third piece surrendered itself to the slope. The horses reared and bucked. Men shouted. One horse went down, dragging another with it. A trace snapped. There were screams, ugly, dull snappings, a sudden high-pitched wail, a terrific crash. The piece was abruptly checked by a high stump jutting out of the hillside, the limber canting sharply to the right. Beyond the limber was a writhing, lashing, kicking tangle of men and horses and harness that reddened horribly.

Whip yelled, "Cut 'em clear. Get the drivers free!" He dodged a heavy hoof that struck with spasmodic viciousness at him and

tugged at the shoulders of the lead driver who screamed, "My leg! My leg!"

Two cannoneers jumped beside Whip, wedged fence rails under the horse, trying to lever it up enough to pull the driver clear. Two more joined them and Whip moved on to the swing pair. The driver was lying, white-faced but cool, pinned by his mount. "I'm all right. Just get Polly off me. I'll—" Something whizzed passed Whip, knocked up his kepi. There was a horrible thud and the swing driver's white face turned to crimson pulp. Whip jumped back before the hoof swung again and pulled out his Colt. "Shoot the horses if you have to. Shoot anyway if their legs are broken. Beal! George Beal. Plug that off lead!"

A sudden crash from the crest jerked his head up and his mind away from the hideous wreckage. The fourth piece teams stood farther down the slope. On the crest, the fourth-section gun crew had fired a round and now were swarming about the barrel, ready for the second shot. Whip braced himself. This was a mere incident, militarily speaking. The third piece must be brought up beside the fourth, must go into action. He yelled, "John Hummel! Take charge here. Cannoneers—by hand to the front. Get 'em going, Beal!"

He raced to the limber and stumbled over a body, two bodies. The nearer must have been George Beal by the stripes on his sleeve. In trying to unlimber at the first alarm, he must have slipped and the wheel had gone over his head. The other was Doughty, a cannoneer, whose chest was scored by a deep, bloody rut, wide as the iron tire of the piece. Whip waved on the survivors as he pulled up the pintle catch. "On the wheels, now. Twenty yards right of the fourth piece." He threw his full strength against the spokes and the Napoleon began its slow ascent.

Someone yelled in his ear and he looked up, crimson with effort, at the bloody-faced major of infantry. The major whacked at his shoulder. "It'll mean a court-martial. One of your men struck me and then disobeyed my orders by unlimbering."

Straining against the dead weight of the piece, Whip snapped, "Get the hell out of here and don't annoy me! And if you're thinking about courts-martial, take a look down the slope at what your orders did to this section. Keep out of my sight. I'll take this right to General Sherman. For God's sake, boys, *heave!*"

Suddenly there was level ground under his feet, the piece moved smoothly. Whip jumped aside as the cannoneers slewed the trail about, dropped it to the ground. Then he looked across the fourth section. The crew was calmly swabbing out the bore. He shouted, "What's the target?"

The gun crew turned sweat-streaked, panting faces toward him. Roy Abbot, the sergeant, threw down his kepi in disgust. "Target? Ten Rebs back of a pile of rocks! They lit out before we'd rammed home a charge. Wish to hell Honker Bell had planked that God-damn fool major another one." Then he looked down the slope and his face went white. "Holy God, what happened?"

"Trouble," said Whip tersely as a mixed squad of drivers and cannoneers manhandled the caisson up the slope. John Hummel, the caisson corporal, his jaw set like a trap, reported to Whip in a cold, expressionless voice. They had been able to drag out Moulton, the wheel driver, with nothing more than severe bruises, but Williams, the swing, was dead from the effects of the kick in the head and Pomictor, the lead, had a leg broken so badly that the bone jutted through the flesh. He probably would not survive an operation. Five of the six horses had had to be shot and the sixth, the off-wheeler, had a severe gash on the shoulder that would take weeks to heal. The caisson team was intact, the drivers having been able to swing the hitch at right angles to the slope. Of the cannoneers, Beal and Doughty were dead.

"I know about them," said Whip shortly. "Hitch a pair from the caisson to the piece limber and borrow another team from the fourth section. Take charge of both sections and stay where you are at the foot of the slope. How about Pomictor?"

"Surgeon from the 26th Illinois looking after him," said Hummel.

"All right. Get back and start shuffling your teams," said Whip, turning to the sections.

The crews were cursing in a dull, sullen rage and went about their duties with dragging slackness. Whip snapped, "Get your tails up! God damn it, we're in action."

He looked ahead through the mist but could see little. Thin lines of infantry to the left and right moved ahead ghostlike, carrying their rifles at port and stepping high as though they were wading through the heavy air. At fifty yards they were lost to sight. Off to

the far left, small arms and artillery slammed and crashed, but he could make out no details. The air above him hummed to the passage of scattered shots and occasional shells arched high on their way to the river, obviously fired at random. To the right front, Chattanooga Valley and Lookout Mountain beyond it were completely veiled. There was little sound from Thomas in the valley, but beyond the great ridge a steady thrumming told of Hooker on the move.

Off to the left someone hailed and Whip saw Kinnyard walking calmly toward him, a riding crop flicking at his boots. The captain's face was powder-stained but his frogged jacket and red-striped breeches could have passed on parade. Whip took renewed strength from Kinnyard's unruffled grave calm. "Look here, sir, a God-damned infantry major —"

Kinnyard held up a gloved hand. "I heard about it, Whip. There was nothing else you could have done. We'll go over it all when the action's finished. We haven't got time now." He pointed to the left. "See that tree with its branches sticking up through the mist? The first platoon's there. Run your guns over by hand. I'll send Nick along to pick up your teams."

"Right," said Whip. "What's been happening?"

"We got the high ground and Ewing's consolidating it. We'll be on the west slope, pretty much to the extreme right. Heath's 100th Indiana's covering us."

"Going to push on?"

Kinnyard shook his head. "Just one of those things that happen. The maps showed this crest as the beginning of the Ridge. It isn't. There's a deep dip, a railroad tunnel that the Rebs hold, and another, higher peak beyond it. That's where their main force is. Now get your sections moving. The Rebs don't like seeing us where we are and they'll come a-booming at us."

Whip turned to the sections. "All right. Hook on your prolongs. Cannoneers on the wheels! By the left flank!"

Whip led the way to the tree that Kinnyard had indicated, and carefully sited his two pieces. Tom came over to join him, shaking his head. "Tough luck, Whip."

Whip set his chin. "If I think about the damn thing, I'll vomit. What's the job here?"

"Just hold on. It's a strong position," said Tom.

"Better be," grunted Whip and went back to his guns.

He called to the gunner corporal, "Bill Carey, you're acting chief of section. Karl Lutz, you play gunner. Fix up the other jobs to suit yourself, Bill. Send two men back to the limbers to bring up more ammunition. Roy Abbot'll send a detail from the fourth. Unship the spare wheels from the caissons so we can get back into action quick if we lose a wheel from a piece."

He looked at his watch, held it to his ear. It was still ticking. Quarter to four! He called to his men, "Better hit your rations while you have a chance. The Rebs—"

Off in the mist that masked the front a single shot cracked out, was answered by a broken ripple of fire. Shapes began to show ahead and the crews sprang to their positions. The Indiana infantrymen laid down their tools and dropped to their knees, rifles ready. The shapes came on, broke into a sharp trot. Whip yelled, "Hold your fire, fourth section. Those are our own skirmishers falling back!"

Panting, the newcomers flung themselves on the ground among their comrades, faces to the front. A few stationed themselves about the guns.

The mist in front was suddenly shattered with a series of dull flashes. Whip raised his hand, dropped it. The gunners snapped the lanyards and the platoon's fire crashed out, smothering the thin, sharp spatter of the infantry. Rammer staffs whirled, cannoncers covered the vents with leather-shielded thumbs, the pieces were run back into place from their recoil. Whip held up both arms. "Fire at will! Canister! Bill Carey, give your elevating screw half a turn up!" Men came running up from the rear, bringing the extra ammunition from the limbers, and jumped to their posts at the pieces. Off to the left the first platoon was firing steadily, blasting into the mist that lifted to show long lines of gray figures coming on at a steady lope. The mist dropped again, lifted, dropped. The gray lines had slowed down. Off to the right, the attackers had halted entirely, thrown themselves to the ground, and opened a careful fire on the Indiana men.

Bullets rapped in hollow succession against the tree behind the pieces. A cannoneer, anonymous in the mist and smoke, pitched

headlong across the trail, staggered to his feet with an arm hanging limp. Another gunner helped him button the arm into his coat and the man kept on serving.

The whining of bullets was slashed through by a rising shriek. Whip yelled, "Watch it, all hands!" The shriek swelled to a crescendo of fury and a shell roared to the ground ten yards beyond the platoon. Shriek on shriek followed, the shells falling farther and farther to the rear. Then some gray gunner, hidden up on the crest, gave a flick to his elevating mechanism. The cry of the shell seemed to be coming directly at Whip. He flung himself flat, shouting a warning to the crews. Sound blotted out the whole ridge and the ground shook under him. He jumped up in a shower of stones and clods. The crews were scrambling to their feet and a shell hole showed a few yards in front of the fourth section.

The air filled again with a tornado of screeches. Three shells, four shells, five shells!

A hoarse voice shouted, "We've got to have fire to the front."

Whip staggered to his feet and saw that the gun crews were getting up. He caught up a rammer staff and ran to the muzzle of the third piece, drove home the charge that a cannoneer had just set in the muzzle. Then he leaped clear as the gunner tugged the lanyard. A violent concussion nearly knocked him over and the roar of the piece mingled with the crash of a descending shell. He roared, "Keep it up. Cover the infantry!" Men dropped to the ground, sprang up, dropped again, recovered themselves and dove to their posts. Infantrymen took shelter under the muzzles and fired into the haze. The platoon fired on. Karl Lutz, newly appointed gunner, slipped down by the right wheel. Whip jumped to take his place, waving to the No. 2 to shift the trail to the left.

A hand fell on his shoulder and he looked about angrily. "What the hell — Oh, sorry. Didn't know it was you."

Kinnyard said, "Cease fire. The front's all clear. They're done for the day."

The attack was broken.

Hour after hour the night echoed to the sound of pick and shovel as the holding force dug itself in from the flats about South Chickamauga Creek on the east to the junction with Howard's forces on

the west. The mists rolled back and stars hung low over Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge.

Whip, after staying up with the two-to-four shift, rolled up in a saddle blanket behind the fourth section. Despite the cold that set him shivering, he fell asleep to toss and dream of being ordered to take his platoon up the sheer face of Lookout Mountain, where Penn stood on the outmost rocky lip calling to him that Knoxville was falling, falling, could only be saved by his two pieces.

He woke cold and desperately stiff.

The sky, flushed to the east, was cloudless and even in the half-light every detail stood out cameo clear. Dead ahead of him, well covered with earthworks, was a long line of blue infantry. Beyond them the ground rose sharply to a rugged crest with the Southern colors floating above earth-and-log fortifications where heavy guns frowned. To his right he could look down into Chattanooga where smoke was beginning to coil up from chimneys. He got out his glasses and stared toward Lookout. A pin point of bright color showed near the northern end, very close to the spot where he and Sharon had crossed, and Whip drew in his breath sharply as his glasses framed it. It was too far for details to show, but that pin point could only be the colors of the Union, secure there since Hooker's relentless sweep of the day before.

He looked along the west slopes of Missionary Ridge, far beyond the most advanced blue outpost. The flank was nearly bare of trees, but deep trenches, facing west, seamed and scored it. Every path and every trail crawled with gray figures. The trenches were stiff with them and guns loomed sullenly in log emplacements. Far down Chattanooga Valley, metal glinted in the climbing sun and Whip caught a hint of blue on the roads that he could see.

Hoofs came clattering from the left and Sherman rode up at the head of a group of officers. He reined in quite close to the battery. Whip heard him snap out terse comments and orders. "Corse will attack in exactly half an hour from the right center. Morgan Smith moves along the east slope of the ridge. Loomis, you'll go along the west. Don't get too far ahead of Corse. Thomas moves out from the flats. Just when I don't know. Grant only wrote, 'At an early hour.' Hooker's held up till he can rebuild a bridge across Chattanooga Creek down there. That's the problem,

gentlemen. Until Thomas and Hooker move, we'll be facing the bulk of Bragg's force and we haven't got room to use our full strength. The ridge is too narrow. Any comments? Then we'll go back and join Ewing."

He swung his mount about and headed close by the fourth piece, the new sun lighting up his coppery beard.

By early afternoon, Loomis's brigade had worked along the bare west slope of the ridge in the face of scattered opposition. The ground was broken and gullied and Kinnyard's four Napoleons, cannoneers on the wheels, found the going heavy, although relatively safe. The rising ground to the left hid the main attack on the center where small arms and artillery crackled and boomed.

Sometime after two o'clock, following a cautious forward movement by the Indiana men ahead, Tom and Whip had sited their platoons on a shelflike stretch. To the east, Ewing's stubborn battle ebbed and flowed. Messengers passing the battery had told Whip that Ewing was within eighty yards of the main works, but could get no farther owing to the narrow front on which he was forced to operate. The last courier had said that Bragg was bringing up more and more troops and that Corse, leader of the attack, had been badly wounded.

Whip smiled grimly as he watched the cannoneers, panting and sweating despite the thin, cold air. "All this is going too damned slow. Whatever happened to Thomas's attack?"

"And what happened to that bunch of Indiana boys who slid off to our right when we came up here?" asked Tom. "Haven't heard a shot from 'em. Think I'll take a look." He scrambled up the right shoulder beyond the shelf, pulling himself along by the sparse low trees and bushes.

He called, "Whip! Whip! For God's sake get up here!"

Whip jumped forward, swung up by a low branch and worked upward among rocks and bushes. The slope was almost sheer in spots and he had to haul and tug his way along by roots and branches. Off to the left he saw Tom, his body clinging somehow to the ground and his head just above the sky line. From time to time he looked around, one earth-stained hand beckoning frantically.

With a last heave Whip reached the top and peered over. His

breath went out as though he had been struck. The shoulder bulged far out of the line of the ridge and commanded a view straight down Chattanooga Valley. The valley floor was alive with long lines of blue, flag-sprinkled, moving east toward Missionary Ridge. Thomas had launched his attack.

From the Chattanooga forts, from the low hills that broke the surface of the valley, from flat ground on either side of Chattanooga Creek, batteries roared. On the bare, scarred slope of the ridge, geysers of dirty brown gushed up, rose lazily to meet the fire-studded white of bursting shrapnel. The blue lines walked steadily east, the sun catching on thousands of bayonets, flashing off the eagle crests of standard after standard.

Whip muttered, "My God! Thomas is chucking in everything!"

Tom impatiently swept a tangle of branches from in front of his face. "What's he going to hit? Damn it, I can't see."

"Get your glasses out. See that raw dirt near the base of the ridge? Reb rifle pits. I saw them from higher up early this morning. Two or three lines of trenches back of them. Batteries, too. Look! There they go! A six-gun battery by those trees. Get it? Two fingers to the right of that big gray rock."

From base to crest, the ridge was erupting, smoke and flame from the defenders' guns stabbing through the Union shell bursts. Down on the flats the attack came on. Blue dots showed motionless on the ground. Here and there a flag went down, was caught up again. Suddenly the whole line broke into double time and a faint wisp of yelling drifted upward through the din.

The blue lines were racing now, rifles at port. They crossed a cart path, plunged through a fringe of trees. Whip pounded the dirt with his fist. "They're in! They're in!" but his voice was lost in the yells that broke out on all sides. There was blue everywhere in the rifle pits and a hurrying drift of gray figures ran back up the hill, all order and formation lost.

The ridge batteries thundered louder and shells flowered hideously among the pits.

Then from the pits a single blue figure broke. Another followed, ten, a dozen, a hundred. They ran and scrambled and scurried, ducking for cover, reappearing, driving on *up* the slope. The first wild wave steadied to a line, joined onto other lines that formed,

pressing up and up toward the muzzles that roared and flamed. They stretched interminably along the whole visible flank of Missionary Ridge.

Sweat ran across the eyepieces of Whip's glasses. He dropped them. They were unnecessary now. One gray battery overrun by a fighting tidal wave of blue, a zigzag trench cleared, another battery smothered while bayonets winked dully. There were no more lines. The regiments had broken into great V's pointed toward the crest, the tip of each point bright with the Union colors. The points vanished, melted away, and the colors were gone. Then the flags rode high again and the V's swept on like flights of deadly birds, striking hard and swift. From trench and redoubt and emplacement, a ragged surf of gray ebbed back and back up the hill, formed in tight, desperate knots that were engulfed, shattered, and swept away.

Suddenly there was blue on the crest, blue against the sky line. A man sprang to a great rock and waved the colors back and forth madly. The sky line bristled with blue. Dots sailed high in the air like flights of crows as men flung up their hats and haversacks.

Whip pushed away from the shoulder. The west side of the ridge was silent. From the direction of Ewing's attack, the volume of fire slackened and slackened. He snapped, "Come on, Tom. Give the boys 'March order'! It's all over!"

The battery had never seen anything like it. Ever since Grant's orders of November 30th had sent Sherman's men driving north through Tennessee toward Knoxville and Longstreet's beleaguering force, the march had lain through steep valleys and neat towns strung along the railroad. From wooded hillsides the Union colors fluttered among the leafless branches, and people ran shouting down the slopes or bucketed along side roads in old carriages and farm wagons. In the towns, flags were strung from house to house. Men, women, and children ran cheering beside the sections, climbed on piece, limber, and caisson, crammed bread and cakes and apples into the men's pockets and haversacks.

Often drivers and cannoneers looked up to see Sherman riding by at the head of his staff, his eyes hard and bright and his copper-bearded chin thrust forward. North the whole force swept, along the railroad, winding through valleys.

Progress was rapid, but Whip chafed at the slightest delay. His whole body felt like a taut spring, stretched to the breaking point. On the march, blind to the soaring majesty of the Great Smokies off to the right, he ranged up and down his sections, fretting over the gauntness of the horses, searching endlessly for the least trace of collar sores or strained tendons, watching the roll of the wheels and tapping the felloes and spokes with a hammer or hunting for signs of dry axles. At night, his lantern bobbed along the picket line as he studied each of the horses, picking up feet, running his hand over hard withers and shoulders. He tested limber poles, snapped pintles open and shut, went back to the teams again.

In a bitter cold camp by an arm of North Mouse Creek, Kinnyard remonstrated with him. "Take it easy, Whip. Nothing's going to happen. We've rolled over four hundred miles since we left Memphis and we've only got about thirty-five to go before we hit Knoxville. Get some rest for yourself."

Whip fumed, "But we're about the only artillery that Uncle Billy's brought along. I'm down to four-horse hitches right through. I've only got one spare wheel left. What if one of my wheelers gets foundered? What if I crack a gun wheel on these damn rock trails they call roads?"

Kinnyard patted his shoulder. "I just say, take it easy."

"I've got special reasons for wanting to roll up to Knoxville, shooting."

"I know, I know. But if you wear yourself out before you get there, you'll find yourself shooting at the moon instead of at a Reb³ brigade. Turn in now. That's an order. We pull out at four in the morning for Loudon."

At Loudon, the bridge was down and Sherman swung his force east again toward the Little Tennessee. By December 5th, the battery, surging ahead with Blair's command, crossed from the west bank and went into position while skirmishers felt out the ground ahead. The blue troopers of Long's small cavalry brigade had disappeared over the horizon more than an hour before.

Whip crouched by a small fire, grilling a piece of meal-covered bacon on a stick while Tom peered anxiously into a battered coffee-pot set among the coals. Tom sniffed the steam from the spout and wrinkled his nose. "Just a sliver of smell, Whip. Maybe it'll taste

like something, though." He looked over his shoulder toward the front where a company of infantry was beating its way through a tangle of scrub growth. "Wish to hell we could find out what's happening. Stuck way off on the right like this we wouldn't hear a thing if the Rebs snapped up Uncle Billy himself."

Whip ran an expert eye over the bacon. "About done. Cut off your share. What's happening? I've got so I duck news as though it was a Dahlgren shell. Oh, we're getting on as fast as we can, I suppose, but what we hear I don't like. This is the fifth and Burnside told Grant he could only hold out till the third. Maybe Longstreet's tight in Knoxville, waiting for a chance to push our faces in."

Tom gnawed cautiously at the hot bacon. "I'm betting Sharon and Penn got out long ago. Burnside wouldn't *let* 'em stay. You can be sure of that. He heard about Pauline Cushman. He must have."

Whip got up impatiently. "Yes. And I wish I hadn't. The Rebs got her and they'd have hanged her if our cavalry hadn't come up. They know she's a friend of Sharon's and Penn's and they know those two have done a lot more than Cushman."

Tom gestured with the coffeepot. "*They're — all — right!* Just get that set in your mind."

Whip held out his cup. "Can't eat that damned bacon. I'll try the coffee, though. Hey — don't dribble it over my hand. What's the matter with you?"

The coffee splashed unheeded to the ground as Tom stared off toward the front. "The infantry! What the hell's got into 'em?"

Half a mile away, some of the skirmishers had halted their advance and were moving hesitantly toward a road that sloped down from the crest of a low ridge. They carried their rifles at trail and walked with slow, crouching steps.

Whip dropped his cup and rubbed his palms along the seams of his trousers. He said in a flat voice, "Something's coming down that road. Something we can't see and they don't like." Mechanically he looked around at the guns. The cannoneers had left their fires and were walking to their posts, their eyes on the distant infantry. From a fallen log, Kinnyard shouted, "Battery! Attention!" and got to his feet.

Whip and Tom ran to their platoons, looking back over their shoulders as they went. Whip cried out a warning as a horseman appeared on the sky line where the road slid over the crest.

"All right," called Tom. "He's blue."

"Yes. But where's he going? Look at him! Come on! Get those muzzle covers off!" He faced to the north, watching the lone cavalryman who halted for an instant. He turned his mount broadside to the road and was looking back in the direction from which he had come. His carbine was ready across his saddle. He wheeled his horse again, backing it off the road.

More horsemen appeared, coming on at a sharp trot. Like the first trooper, they had their carbines out and they kept looking back over their shoulders as they rode.

They came quickly on toward the position. Kinnyard shouted, "Get ready to cover them if they're being chased."

The last files had cleared the crest and were rattling closer. More riders showed on the sky line. Like the troopers they looked back over their shoulders, but they wore civilian clothes and kept no sort of formation.

Whip croaked, "They've hit something bad. It's a rout!" The troopers were nearly abreast of them. From his crouch over the handspike, Whip stared at them in amazement. The cavalrymen were grinning, waving to the gunners and pointing back down the road.

Whip ran forward. "For God's sake what's happened?"

A stocky sergeant winked down at him. "Put away your popguns! Longstreet's pulled foot! Burnside's cavalry's after him. Where's Uncle Billy? We've got the mayor of Knoxville and a mess of judges and a dogcatcher or two wanting to see him. Man, you ought to see that town. It's plumb crazy. I ain't been kissed so much since I helped put out a fire in a bad-house."

The troopers were gone and the civilian riders drew abreast of the guns. They were solid, dignified men who kept their jaws set hard as though keeping a firm rein on their emotions. One of them checked his mount and called to Whip, "Do you know anything about Kinnyard's battery? I'm Judge Temple—Oliver Temple."

Whip ran forward. "Right here, sir. Look—I want to know—"

But Temple rode on, raising a finger to the brim of his silk hat and saying, "That's all right then."

"Wait," shouted Whip, but the judge was soon out of earshot.

There were more and more riders, a carriage or two, all moving on at a steady trot. Whip called again and again, but the people only waved and kept on their way.

Whip turned quickly and called to Tom, "Let's mount up and ride into Knoxville. Damn it, we've got to find out —"

There was a grind of halting wheels, a stamping of hoofs out in the road. A woman's voice called, "Look! There! Right there!"

Whip started, then ran forward. Penn, her cheeks wet and her eyes alight, was slipping down from an open carriage, Sharon close behind her. Whip said, "Oh, my God!" in a choked voice. She seemed feather-light to him as he caught her in his arms and swung her clear of the ground. Her arms were tight about his neck and her face was pressed close to his. He said over and over, "You're safe! You're safe!"

She whispered, "Safe, my darling! We're all safe. There'll never be another gray uniform from the Smokies to the Mississippi." She clung tighter. "So wonderful! I can't even think! I'm breathless! Oh —"

She stepped quickly away from Whip, coloring. The men of the battery were cheering, waving their kepis. Kinnyard, cap in hand, was shouting, "That's who they are and what they've done. Give 'em another cheer."

When Whip, flushing to the eyes; presented Kinnyard to Penn and to Sharon, who came up on Tom's arm, he thought that he would suffocate with pride. Pride in Kinnyard with his grave courtesy, pride in his battery, whose members began to drift away tactfully, and high above all a deep, deep pride in Penn, smiling so warmly on Alastair Kinnyard. To have the love of Penn and the friendship and respect of his battery commander seemed to him more luck than any man like himself could possibly merit.

Kinnyard said quietly to Penn and Sharon, "I don't know how much time you'll have. Orders come fast from Sherman. But I'm relieving your young men from duty till further notice. I expect you'll have a good deal to talk over." He bowed to the two girls, smiled his grave smile, and walked away.

Penn hooked her arm through Whip's and they strolled toward the edge of the road, Tom and Sharon a little beyond them. Penn rested her head against Whip's sleeve. "You haven't been too much worried, darling? It was perfectly safe for Sharon and me and there was so much to do. And I never felt the least bit worried — at least I didn't when I heard that Sherman was coming up the state."

Whip pressed her arm. "Of course I worried — even in my sleep. You're not going to do any more of this, young lady."

She said quietly, "If there's work they think I can do, I'll have to do it, Whip. You know that. The war's not over. But you can be easy for a while, anyway. I'm going to Ohio with Sharon while she waits for Tom."

"You are, are you? And what will *you* be doing?"

"Waiting for you, of course." She called out in a happy voice and waved as more carriages went by. "The Gresham girls. They've got a lot of brothers and a fiancé apiece with Oliver Howard's men, in General von Steinwehr's division. There go the Plaice twins and old Mrs. Plaice. Oh, darling, such a happy day. If only it were really the end."

"That's coming," said Whip. He looked back past the guns. Out on the road, men were cheering again, tossing their caps in the air. Whip gently turned Penn about. "I was hoping you'd see this," he said.

There were hoofbeats down the road and a tall rider appeared, his head covered with a low-crowned black hat. Men shouted, "Hey! Uncle Billy! Going to let us chase Longstreet?" . . . "You scared him too bad, Uncle Billy. We wanted him to stay and let you romp on him!"

Sherman rode very erect and his head turned from side to side in quick, abrupt motions. His mouth was tightly compressed under his coppery beard and his eyes had the same hard brightness that his men had seen in the long march up Tennessee.

He swung suddenly from the road, his escort halting, and sent his horse up a low mound beyond the battery. There he reined in, staring south.

"What do you suppose he's looking at?" whispered Penn.

Whip laughed and gathered her hand in his. "If I know anything about him, he's looking at something about four months ahead." He

turned to Sharon. "You know the country down there better than we do. What could he be studying over?"

Sharon smiled up at Tom. "If what you say about him's true, then from the way he's facing, he's looking clear down into Georgia. Maybe right on to the sea."

"H'm," said Tom. "It wouldn't surprise me a bit."

"And we'll be with him," said Whip in a low voice.

Penn pressed his arm gently. "Sh! Not now. You're here now. We're together." All eyes went back to the solitary figure on the horse, outlined against the sky. As they watched, he slowly took off his hat and the sun, breaking through the clouds, touched his red head and the odd tuft of hair sticking up in the back. Then he threw back his head with an air of decision, covered abruptly, swung his horse about and galloped off down the road.

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